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THE GOSPEL IN A GREAT CITY

BISHOP WELLDON



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J. E. C. W.

THE GOSPEL IN A GREAT CITY

SERMONS

PREACHED CHIEFLY IN MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL

BY

JAMES EDWARD COWELL WELLDON, D.D.

DEAN OF MANCHESTER

LONDON

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P R E F A C E

THE sermons in this volume have all been preached, though not all quite at full length, in Manchester, and nearly all in the cathedral, except the two last which were preached in St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey at the consecrations of my colleagues in the cathedral, Canon Wright to the Archbisprie of Sydney, and Canon Hicks to the Bishoprie of Lincoln. They are all, then, in a sense Manchester sermons ; and I have added to them an address delivered on an occasion when the members of some Non-conformist brotherhoods in Manchester were good enough to attend at their own desire a special service in the cathedral. It is my hope that they may show to the people of Manchester, and possibly to others as well, what is in my eyes the true relation of a cathedral to the life and thought of a great city. For it seems to me that, next only to the Mission Field, a great city is the most inspiring sphere of the clerical ministry. Politics, strictly so-called, I have always avoided in the pulpit ; but moral questions, even

PREFACE

when they lie on the border line of political controversy, have not seemed to me to be properly excluded from the legitimate range of a preacher's interest. The sermons which I have chosen for publication are such as may, I hope, be felt to possess a certain civic interest; but they represent only one side of my ministry, and that a side certainly not more important than the teaching of definite Christian truth. It is perhaps worth while to notice that all the texts of the sermons are taken from the New Testament. I can only hope that the character of the sermons may prove to have been in some degree unifying, elevating, and spiritualising.

The Authorised Version of the Bible has been, for its familiarity, generally quoted in these sermons as being suitable to mixed congregations; but where accuracy seemed to be especially desirable, as in the sermons on Episcopacy, the Revised Version has been used.

J. E. C. WELLDON.

July 20, 1910.

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THE GOSPEL IN A GREAT CITY

I

THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP¹

“Our conversation is in heaven.”—PHIL. iii. 20.

“CONVERSATION” in this passage, as indeed the Revised Version shows, means “citizenship”; and so to take it is the only way of entering fully into the strong and solemn purport of St. Paul’s words. For he knew what citizenship was. He was himself, as he says, “a citizen of no mean city,” but not of Tarsus only; he was a citizen of the Roman Empire, the greatest confederation of races and peoples which the world had ever known until the British Empire attained its pre-eminent position; he was the inheritor of an imperial franchise so august that an English statesman, speaking on a memorable occasion in

¹ A first sermon preached in Manchester Cathedral on Sunday, 29th July 1906.

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the House of Commons, could find no better emblem of the safety and the dignity guaranteed to all subjects of the late Queen by their British citizenship than the ancient phrase consecrated to the ears and the hearts of all citizens of Rome, *Civis Romanus sum*. St. Paul was a Roman citizen, and, as being such, he enjoyed and exercised the franchise of supreme authority in the world; and the Philippians to whom he wrote knew well what it was. Yet it is not of this citizenship that he reminds them in the text. There was another citizenship—higher far—that was theirs too. They were citizens, not of earth only, but of heaven. They were invested with a celestial franchise. They were “fellow-citizens with the saints” of God. And this higher citizenship was not, in his eyes or in theirs, something alien from the life which they were bound to live as citizens of an earthly state; it was not a prerogative, now to be claimed and now to be forgotten or ignored, in the daily performance of their private and public duties; but it was an inspiring principle which should tend to lift them, in every aspect and relation of life, farther and farther from the low-lying offices and interests of earth, nearer and nearer to the serene and sacred throne of God in heaven.

If I may imagine St. Paul speaking from this

pulpit to such a congregation as I see before me, I think he would say to you, in the spirit of my text, “ You are citizens of Manchester, ‘ citizens,’ indeed, ‘ of no mean city,’ but a city whose fame has spread to the ends of the civilised world ; yes, and you are citizens of the British Empire ; you live under the flag which is the most vivid and potent symbol known to mankind ; but it is not the citizenship of Manchester, not the citizenship of the British Empire, that is your supreme privilege ; you are citizens of heaven, you are called to act in the affairs of your city and of your country, and in your private lives as well, with the consciousness of a celestial inheritance. Oh ! remember the height of your calling, the responsibility of your privilege ; live as citizens in a spirit not unworthy of the gospel of your Lord and Master Jesus Christ.”

The Christian then possesses a double franchise —a franchise of earth, and a franchise of heaven. But these are not incompatible, nor even separable. St. Paul knows nothing of the modern conventional distinction between the secular and the sacred sides of human life. In his eyes the State may be less sacred, but it is not less truly sacred, than the Church. He would almost as soon allow that the State has no concern with religion as that the Church has no concern with civic duty

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or social reform. Whatever may be the equitable relation of different religious bodies living side by side in the same political community, it would, I think, seem to him a paradox to maintain that, at a time when the State is interested, as it never was before, in the amelioration of the physical and moral conditions under which the mass of the people, in the great cities especially, live, it should deliberately discard the most efficacious and energetic of all motives to philanthropy—religion, or the love of God, which is the one unfailing warrant for the love of man.

Brethren, a good citizen, and still more a good Christian, is not two beings, but one. There is no possibility of dividing his life into water-tight compartments. He is not a religious man in church, and an irreligious man outside. He cannot be honourable in public life if in private life he is fraudulent or untrustworthy. It is for this reason that the people have been led in recent years by a sound and sure instinct to demand of their public men throughout the constituencies an obedience to those moral laws upon which all societies and communities ultimately depend. They have silently argued that a statesman or a politician cannot make a worse beginning of elevating his fellow-citizens than by debasing himself. Men are tempted to essay the task of

making others better ; but the one infallible service which they can render the State is to make themselves better. Political schools, parties, administrations, cabinets, rise and fall, and it is often difficult to appraise the good or the evil they have done ; but there is no one, not the poorest or humblest citizen, who may not, if he will, enrich the State with the treasure which is most enduring and ennobling—his own sincere, honest, upright, virtuous Christian life.

Brethren, we all need to be raised day by day, in thought and character, from the citizenship of earth to the citizenship of heaven. We need to live more and more not as worldly men and women, whose souls are bounded by the range of mere temporal and terrestrial aspirations, but as the citizens of an eternal commonwealth, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, redeemed and consecrated by the Passion of the Saviour Jesus Christ. So, but so only, shall we live on earth the life of heaven ; so shall we lift the society in which we move to ourselves, by lifting ourselves to God.

And if this be the end of Christian citizenship, then it will indicate the proper functions of the churches and cathedrals, and of all whose high privilege it is to minister in them, throughout this realm of England. Speaking to you for the

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first time in my own cathedral, which is your cathedral too, I ask myself, with deep and solemn feelings, how it can subserve, and how I in my humble way can help it to subserve, the needs of Manchester.

A cathedral such as this is eloquent of two great thoughts—antiquity and sublimity.

It carries the mind backwards.

The habitual worshipper—nay, even the casual visitor—when he reflects upon this sacred building or the site on which it stands as historically associated with Christian public worship for a period reaching back beyond the Conquest, cannot but realise how poor and petty are not a few of the controversies now most fiercely agitated, in comparison with the age-long life of the Church of Jesus Christ. He will believe with an assured conviction that the Church which has weathered so many fierce storms and so many angry seas will not, and cannot, be wrecked by the winds and waves of the twentieth century. To him it will seem the most inspiring evidence of faith in the destiny of the Church of England that not only did she in the last century rebuild and restore, amplify and beautify her ancient sanctuaries through all the length and breadth of the country—this stately cathedral church of Manchester being not the least conspicuous among

them—but she set herself after the lapse of more than two hundred years to the task of raising new cathedrals. Until but the other day, St. Paul's in London was the youngest of English cathedrals. It is not so now. At Truro and at Liverpool new cathedrals are already springing into life; at Southwark and at Southwell, as even earlier at Manchester, churches of high and ancient renown have been enlarged into the spacious dignity of cathedrals. It is true that a cathedral is the work, not of one century, but of several centuries. But wherever men build cathedrals they believe in Jesus Christ; they know that His day is not dying; they know that His Kingdom shall come. Will you then suffer me to remind you of a striking passage which occurs in the writings of the sceptical Jew Heine? “Recently,” he says, “when I stood before the cathedral of Amiens with a friend, and the friend contemplated with amazement that monument, whose rock-like towers were the expression of gigantic strength, and the little carved stone figures, of dwarf-like, endless patience, he asked me at last why it is that we to-day are incapable of building such edifices. I answered him, ‘Dear Alphonse, the men of olden time had convictions; we modern men have only opinions, and more than these are needed to raise cathedrals.’”

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It would not be possible, thank God ! to level that taunt at the English Churchmen of to-day.

A cathedral, whether ancient or modern, is a witness, all the more eloquent because silent through the ages, to the unbroken continuity of the Church's life.

It carries the mind backwards.

But it also lifts the heart upwards.

If there is any lesson especially appropriate to a sanctuary of Christian faith and worship such as this, it is the lesson of the heavenly citizenship. As we travel over the land, and, passing one after another the villages and townships and cities, everywhere descry from the windows of our carriage the houses of God raising their heads in solemn dignity above the common homes of earthly life, we seem to hear a Divine, eternal voice, that says, "Lift up your hearts. Set your affection on things above. Your citizenship is in heaven. Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Brethren, that is the true conception (if I mistake it not) of this cathedral church—to elevate and consecrate the life of the city of Manchester.

Do we not all need this elevation, this consecration ? Whatever our line of life may be, whether it be politics, or commerce, or civic business, or the law, or (I am afraid I must add) even

the ministry of religion, there are forces and influences which tend to drag us down as well as others which tend to lift us upwards ; it is possible to take the lower or the higher view of our profession ; there are moments when we feel that we are of the earth, earthy, and other moments when we desire and perhaps enjoy the vision of God. Nay, I do not think I go too far if I venture to assert that, for some at least of the great personal and social problems of the age, it is religious faith, and that alone, which seems to offer the promise or the possibility of solution. As the Psalmist said in the old familiar words, “Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I the end of these men.”

This cathedral, then, shall be the home, the inspiring source of our deepest thoughts and purest resolves and most spiritual devotions. It shall remind us from day to day that, while we dwell on earth, “our conversation is in heaven.” It shall bid us cherish the things which are true, and honest, and lovely, and of good report. It shall help to purify the springs of our corporate public life. It shall in greater or less degree solemnise and consecrate our civic policy. Here within these walls we shall meet, I hope, for common worship on the occasions of national or local joy and

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sorrow. Here we shall implore and invoke the benediction of the Almighty upon the authorities who are charged with the highest civic responsibility, and upon the measures undertaken and prosecuted for the good of the citizens at large.

The cathedral shall elevate and sanctify the life of Manchester.

But if that be, as I think it is, the office of the cathedral, then at once it suggests certain inferences.

The cathedral must be, as far as possible, a centre of unity. It must be the sanctuary in which the largest number of Churchmen—I would even hope, of Christians too—in the city can unite as worshippers from time to time with the most vivid sense of harmony, or at least with the most subdued sense of disagreement. To constitute the cathedral a vantage-ground of sect or party would be to do injury to its spiritual beneficence.

To me, indeed, it is difficult to realise how a clergyman can ever deem or dream that he does God service, if by any action of his he wilfully drives away any soul for whom Christ died from the worship of the sanctuary. So long as the people come to church, there is at least an opportunity of admonishing and encouraging them; of helping, strengthening, and consecrating them by the public ministries of religion. But if they stay

outside the church, then the sermons, however eloquent, and the services, however elaborate, can do them no good, but for them must be as though they had never been. Whatever latitude may be rightly allowed in the parish churches of a great city, where it is desirable to make provision for the varieties of liturgical taste or ecclesiastical sympathy, the cathedral should be the common ground of all who reverence and love the Church of England as their mother.

You may rest assured, brethren, that, so long as I am here, there will be nothing done to prejudice or narrow, on one side or the other, the wide and wise comprehensiveness of this central church of Manchester. It will ever be my aim, by such services as are held here, to win the hearts and souls of all reasonable Churchmen and Church-women. And if I lay a certain emphasis upon the word “reasonable,” you must forgive me; for there are some persons in the Church who are not reasonable at all, and the apostolic prayer to be “delivered from unreasonable men”—and even women—has never wholly lost its force in any age of the Christian Church, and has not lost it now.

I am a strong Evangelical. I am a still stronger Churchman. But I am, I hope, strongest of all as a Christian. One who has preached the gospel,

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as I have, in so many parts of the British Empire and beyond it, and has come into contact, even though it be but slight, with so many of the great non-Christian religions of the world, is naturally disposed to dwell more upon those main fundamental truths which all orthodox Christians hold in common, than upon the differences between one party in the Church, or one Christian denomination, and another. And if there is any place in Manchester which ought to be, so far as any one place can be, a meeting-ground of all Churchmen, and perhaps now and then, of all true Christians, it can only be the cathedral.

For the present, I do not propose to make any changes worth speaking of in the services of the cathedral. It will be my duty to attend the services, to observe and enjoy them, to estimate how far they suit the needs and the tastes of worshippers, and then, but not till then, to think if there is any good reason for modifying them. Innovations made after experience may be salutary ; but if they are made in haste, and perhaps have afterwards to be unmade, they disturb the peace of mind—the solemnised tranquillity—which is itself an element in the highest spiritual worship. But coming here from Westminster Abbey, where I have found an inexpressible joy in the daily services and, not least, in the music of them as

rendered under the auspices of one whose name is justly dear to this cathedral church of Manchester, I shall not be able to rest content with anything short of perfect dignity and beauty in divine worship. It is a happiness to know that the new pecuniary arrangements proposed in connection with the Deanery will, if the Bill which has been brought into Parliament becomes law, tend to enrich the Dean and Chapter with the means of beautifying the services of the cathedral.

Brethren, we are called to show common sense, and perhaps more than common charity. We shall need to think good one of another, and not evil. Most human actions admit of a friendly or an unfriendly interpretation, and, as a rule, it is the most friendly interpretation which is the most Christian. Let us then begin a new era in the history of the cathedral with mutual consideration and sympathy. A good many changes which are made in the conduct of divine worship, and a good many objections which are urged against them, seem alike to rest upon a deficiency of historical knowledge. Forgive me, then, if I remind you that a usage, innocent in itself, may excite just offence if it is thrust, suddenly and rudely, upon a congregation; whereas a usage of greater significance may be harmless and even valuable if there lies behind it the authority of many years.

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May I not ask you, then, to trust me as one who desires, in his guardianship of this cathedral church, to make it, as far as lies in his power, the centre of all that is best and highest and holiest in the thought and life of Manchester?

It is in this desire that I wish to hold myself aloof, unless upon wholly exceptional occasions, from political controversy.

I do not say there will never be times when it may become my duty to take a public part in politics. A democracy imposes upon all its citizens the necessity of defending from time to time the interests which they hold to be supreme by such action as is at once constitutional and efficacious. But this I may say, that I shall always ascend a political platform with reluctance, and shall always leave it with satisfaction.

For it is my fervent hope that such influence as I can exercise, in the cathedral especially, may be a uniting rather than a dividing force; and if, as a political partisan, I were to alienate from religion or from the Church some part of the sympathy which might otherwise be given to holy things, it would seem to me that so far I had failed, or come short of, the duty and the privilege rightly belonging to me as a pastor of souls. It is in social questions, more than in questions strictly political, that the Church to-day may find her true sphere

of beneficent activity ; and even in treating of these questions, although I shall not hesitate to speak my mind about them, yet my natural platform will, I think, be the pulpit, and it will always be my endeavour to approach them from the side, not of politics, but of religion.

Brethren, you will forgive me if for once—for the only time, I hope, during my ministry at Manchester—I have referred in the cathedral to myself. It were an error of judgment in one who is now only girding on his armour to define his intended course of action in much detail. But there are certain main principles—such as characterise the general relation of a Dean to the cathedral and to the city—about which it is eminently desirable that there should from the first be no possibility of misunderstanding. To be the friend of all who will be friends with me ; to seek peace and ensue it, both in private and in public life ; to love justice and equity and righteousness ; to “show myself gentle and be merciful for Christ’s sake to poor and needy people, and to all strangers destitute of help” ; to take a part, however humble, in the work of cleansing, elevating, and sanctifying the lives of the people, and of ameliorating the domestic conditions under which they live ; to promote social reforms, but never to promote them at the expense of injustice to classes or to individuals ;

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to encourage thrift, order, education, temperance, purity; to draw Christians a little nearer to each other by drawing them all nearer to Christ; to use the cathedral as a rallying point for the forces of virtue, and a motive power of generous and noble civic action—above all, as a centre of spiritual communion between Christians and their Incarnate and Eternal Lord—that is what a Dean in a great city may, I think, rightly set before himself as his mission in life.

For “our conversation”—our citizenship—“is in heaven.” That citizenship is not future only, but present. We are freemen of Christ. We are invested with the prerogative of a divine franchise. We are bidden to order our lives, not by the feeble flickering beacon-lights of earth, but by the eternal stars in heaven.

Is not this the thought that comes home now to all our hearts?

You who know Manchester so well cannot be present at this service without a deep, and it may be sorrowful, consciousness of the changes which time has lately wrought in your ancient city. Old faces, beloved and honoured, have passed away. Strangers, like myself, occupy the seats of tried and trusted friends. A political election has revolutionised the fate of parties, as they have not been revolutionised since the era of the Great Reform

Bill. New ideas, social, economic, imperial, religious, ecclesiastical, are stirring in the minds and hearts of men.

All is movement. All is change. Nobody fully knows what may be on the morrow.

But there is One who changes not. "I am the Lord ; I change not."

" Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same."

Yes, and there is One, One alone among the sons of men, who has shared the Divine attribute of immutability : "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Let us lift our hearts to Him. Let us try to live, even upon earth, the eternal life, whose Author and Master He is.

For "our conversation"—our citizenship—"is in heaven." That shall be the motto—the inspiration—of our lives. So shall we confront the arduous and anxious problems of the day; not indeed without deep searchings of heart, but at least with something of the generous hope, and trustful sympathy, and lofty idealism which befits the servants of the living Lord. So, too, shall it be well with us and with our children after us, and well with the city which we love.

II

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON

“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”—REV. xxi. 5.

THE first Sunday of the New Year is a day of hope, of promise, of anticipation. It is true indeed that the stream of time flows onwards uninterruptedly ; the periods which mark its course are in a sense the mere creations of human convenience. But who does not feel moved to take stock, so to say, of his life ; who does not imagine that it is somehow possible to make a fresh start upon the anniversary of his birth, or of his marriage, or upon Christmas Day, or Easter Day, or at the beginning of a New Year ?

For Christianity is the religion of hope ; it touches the hard rock of human nature, as it were, with a magic wand, and immediately there breaks forth the fresh bubbling water of a regenerate life. The one word wholly incompatible with the Christian faith and the Christian spirit is “despair.”

There is hope for the individual.

Read the story of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and see how His presence breathed a new life, wherever He moved, into sad, downcast, penitent, abandoned souls. The publican or tax-gatherer, the alien Samaritan woman, the leper, the Magdalene, the thief upon the cross—He gave them all hope.

Or read the biographies of the saints in all Christian ages—the long catena of the men and women who, being in the world, have by the Divine grace been lifted above it, and have revealed to human eyes something of the light and beauty of heaven. Who and what have they been? Were they for the most part safe, happy, sheltered, innocent, unspotted souls? Were they not rather commonly sinners struck down in their mid-career of folly and vice by the sudden consciousness of sin; plucked, like brands from the burning, by a Divine arm out of shame and ruin into the grace and glory of a new-born life?

There is hope, too, for society.

Do we hear any faithless voices to-day protesting that this England of ours is going to the dogs because of Free Trade, or unemployment, or the physical degeneration of the people, or the decadence of patriotic spirit and virtue? Such despondency is un-Christian, it is rebellious against the Providence of God. It denies the

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possibility of His “fulfilling Himself in many ways.” But the future is, as the past was, in His keeping. His name is not “I was,” but “I am.” It may be impossible to fight against the spirit of the age, but is not that spirit the breath of His Almighty Will? In human history the great tendencies, the great achievements, are all the direct and visible results of God’s working; it is only small results which are even apparently wrought by man. Not less true is it of the present than of the future life that God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

The Christian world has never wholly lost faith in those “times of refreshing,” those “times of restitution of all things” for which the Founder of Christianity Himself bade it watch and pray. Ever and again it has fondly dreamed of a re-generation of society. It has looked for a new heaven and a new earth, and has looked in vain. It has heard, or has thought it heard, a voice crying in its ears, “Behold, I make all things new,” and they have not all become new.

If I do not misread the scroll of human history, there have been at least four signal epochs when the momentous character of the events which were passing before men’s eyes has created a belief in the finger of God as visibly inaugurating a novel dispensation of human society. Suffer me briefly

to recall them to your minds ; they will lead up to the lesson which it is in my heart to teach.

The first was the destruction of the Holy City, Jerusalem.

It is difficult now, after so many centuries of Christianity, to realise or imagine what a weight of awe and agony lay upon Jewish and Christian souls alike at the spectacle of the pagan army of Titus acclaiming him as emperor, and offering sacrifice for his victory amidst the smoking ruins of the Temple on Mount Moriah. No adequate expression of their sentiments could be found but in the prophetic picture of "the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not." The Jewish historian Josephus describes the catastrophe in terms such as these : "The people could not indeed but remember the awful visible signs which had preceded the siege, the fiery sword, the armies fighting in the air, the opening of the great gate, the fearful voice within the sanctuary, 'Let us go hence.' . . . Yet the undying hopes of fierce fanaticism were kept alive by the still renewed prediction of that Great One who would at this time arise out of Judæa and assume the dominion of the world." When that prediction failed the catastrophe was complete. To the Jews it was the death-blow of their theocracy, to the Christians it was the birthday of their universal

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Church. It was the consummation of the ages. It was the Advent of the Son of Man. In hope or in fear, in rejoicing or in mourning, men whose lifetime was contemporary with the destruction of the Holy City believed themselves to be living in a day when the old social and ecclesiastical order was passing away, and a new heaven and a new earth were being born.

There was in the ancient world one city alone whose fortune could vie in interest or importance with the fortune of Jerusalem. Imperial Rome had for four centuries typified in men's eyes the strength, the dignity, the permanency, the invincibility of empire. It had never entered into the minds of statesmen or philosophers that the City of Rome could bow its proud head to an invader's yoke :—

“ While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand ;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall ;
And when Rome falls, the world.”

The occupation of Rome then by the barbarian hordes of the North was the second event which seemed in the judgment of contemporary witnesses to mark the conclusion of one, and the inauguration of another, social system. There is no need to expatiate upon that event. As its central episode I may take the entrance of Alaric into Rome in the year 410 A.D. Let me quote the

language of the historian Gibbon: "At the hour of midnight the Salarian Gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and civilised a considerable part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia."

What was the passionate movement of men's thoughts at such a time, and how a new and burning hope could issue from despair, it is still possible to read in the pages of Augustine's famous treatise, *De Civitate Dei*. Then was born, too, the conception of a secular power co-ordinate and sympathetic with the Christian Church. It was a high conception, never indeed accomplished, but approximately realised, if ever, in the life and person of Charlemagne; and students of history know that the book which Charlemagne was wont to listen to, as it was read to him during his meals, was Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*.

Once more the hope of a new heaven and a new earth dawned upon men's eyes in the historical drama which on its literary or intellectual side is known as the Renaissance, and on its moral or religious side as the Reformation. I know not if it is always recognised how strong an anticipa-

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tion of a new social and spiritual order was thrilling men's minds in the slowly dying years of the Middle Ages. One significant instance of it—all that it is possible to cite in my sermon—is that, when Columbus set sail for the unknown and unexplored western world, it was his object to seek the new heaven and the new earth of which he had read, as he was wont to say, in Isaiah's prophecy.

The world had lain too long under authority ; it had moved in chains or upon crutches ; at last it was free. Nobody could tell any day what new truth of learning or religion might come to light on the morrow. For spiritually minded Christians it was enough that they had burst the bonds of the ecclesiastical and sacerdotal system which had so long intervened between their souls and God, and that they could breathe the large, pure atmosphere of heaven. They worshipped liberty ; it scarcely occurred to them that liberty itself might prove an idol. Luther was not free from the occasional despondency which most great souls experience in the retrospect of their life's work. Few literary passages are more pathetic than his confessions of the spiritual loss, the poverty of faith, the difficulty of prayer, the failure of communion with the Highest attending at times upon the many gains of the Reformation.

But he never doubted that the world had been flooded with a novel and sacred light, and, on his death-bed, he could utter his conviction in a prayer such as this: "O my God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, source of all consolation, I thank Thee for having revealed unto me Thy well-beloved Son, in whom I believe, whom I have sought to make known to all Thy people and acknowledged before them, that they might be led to Thee, whom I do love and celebrate, and whom the pope and infidels do persecute."

So strangely chequered, so full of light and shade, so confident and yet so penitent was the spirit of the Reformation. Yet if ever there was in the ages of Christian history an event which might have been taken to foretell an actual regeneration of human society, it was that great intellectual and spiritual movement of the fifteenth Christian century.

Let me pass to the fourth and last epoch. It was then that the brightest hopes were entertained, and the boldest prophecies were uttered, about the birth of a new age which should regenerate the worn-out social order of European life. It was the epoch of the French Revolution. There are probably in this congregation some persons who can recall the striking passage where Goethe, in his autobiography, narrates how, as he

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stood upon the field of Valmy, some of his companions in the Army of the Allies asked him what was his opinion of the battle which had lately been fought and won, and he replied : “ From this place and from this day forth commences a new era in the world’s history, and you can all say that you were present at its birth.” In France at least men did aim at inaugurating a novel era by the crisis of the Revolution. They established a new religious creed and worship ; they introduced a new calendar of years and months and days ; they turned the world upside down. But a few years passed, and the Festival of Reason, and the calendar of Romme and Fabre d’Eglantine, and all the substitutes for Christian laws and customs and names, had lapsed into the limbo of forgotten things. Whatever judgment may be formed upon the French Revolution—and no student can deny its widespread and lasting consequences—at least the new heaven and the new earth were not born then.

The four momentous historical events of which I have spoken were essentially different in character.

The first, the Destruction of Jerusalem, was ecclesiastical. It broke up the system of one Church ; it gave life and liberty to another.

The second, the Invasion of the Roman Empire,

was political. The uncivilised and un-Christianised Goth assumed the sceptre of the Cæsars.

The third, the Renaissance or the Reformation, was intellectual and spiritual ; it was an insurrection of the human mind and soul against long-established tyranny.

The fourth, the French Revolution, was social ; the emancipation of the people from the privilege and dominion of the classes.

It is far from my wish to minimise the importance of the consequences issuing from each of these four events ; but the dream of a new heaven and a new earth, the dream of a regenerated and consecrated society, exempt from the moral evils of which the world in human history has been only too full—that was proved, and was always doomed to prove, a chimera. So it has come to pass that the enthusiasm of each great movement in turn has, after a while, given place in some degree to disquietude and disappointment.

“ He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” The promise stands as part of the vision which St. John in his Apocalypse enjoyed and revealed. But it is a promise of heaven, not of earth. The Holy City, the new Jerusalem which the Apostle beheld, does not rise from the earth heavenwards ; it “ comes down from God out of heaven.” Vain is it there-

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fore to suppose that any change of social or political environment will effect the regeneration of society. In all the actual or possible circumstances of the State human nature remains and will remain the same, the same in its greatness and its littleness, the same in its aspirations and temptations, the same in its essential and inalienable needs.

Once again in the present day there is springing up in the hearts of some men a flush of expectation, as though society stood anew on the threshold of a beneficent reconstruction. The present age, whatever its merits or its demerits, is not perhaps characterised by an inordinate modesty, nor does it shrink from facing serious and difficult problems in a confident spirit. It is impossible to help feeling astonishment at the mental attitude of reformers who are so sanguine of discovering a remedy for the inveterate ills of human life and human nature.

The social order is faulty enough, God knows ; it is darkened by inequality ; it is saddened by poverty and misery ; but, such as it is, its stability is the outcome of long and painful efforts. At the worst it is infinitely better than barbarism. To disintegrate and dissolve it were easy enough ; but to build up another social order from the foundation is a different task.

If I may speak of Socialism as I know it in the north of England, the Socialists—or many of them—seem to be so deeply impressed by existing social evils that they are ready to adopt almost any nostrum as a remedy for them. They declaim long and loudly, not indeed without some reason, against property and privilege. But I have never yet succeeded in bringing them to the sober, prosaic office of working out the social problem upon their own hypothesis of human rights and human duties. In a word, they anticipate far too much from a change of social conditions; they dwell far too little upon the conversion of human hearts. May I then remind them that high hopes of human regeneration have not seldom been dashed to the ground? Students of economical science are well aware that in the early days of co-operation, Robert Owen, in the fresh thrill of his enthusiasm for a movement which was destined, as he thought, to abolish the anti-social competitive instincts of mankind, inscribed on the façade of Tytherly Hall the mysterious letters “C.M.,” signifying the “Commencement of the Millennium.” But, as the historian of co-operation, the late George Jacob Holyoake, shrewdly observes, “The obstinate millennium declined to begin its career there.”

The Socialists of to-day see so clearly the evils

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of the present that they fail to see the possible evils of the future. They are so deeply impressed by the poverty and misery and inequality of the world that, rather than "bear those ills they have," they are ready to "fly to others that they know not of." It is a just complaint against them that they indulge in rhetoric at the expense of reason ; they declaim against the existing social order, and they have not thought out how a new social order is to be created.

It is no part of my purpose in this sermon to enter upon an elaborate examination of Socialism. For me, at least, it is impossible to look upon Socialism as being intrinsically irreligious or immoral ; I cannot forget that the earliest Christians were Socialists. Yet that Christian Socialism, voluntary as it was, dependent on an elevated morality and practised for a brief while only on a small social scale, can scarcely be regarded as affording a guarantee for the success of a complete Socialistic reconstruction of civilised human life.

There are, I think, three mistakes which the Socialists of to-day almost uniformly make :—

(1) They underrate the magnitude of the change involved in Socialism. It has been found practicable to nationalise or municipalise the control of gas and electricity, of the tramways, and even of the railways. But the nationalisation

of all the means of communication, of all the supplies of coal and food, of all banks and factories, and of all the land as well, would involve the rebuilding of human society from the foundation. Yet in the catechism published by the Executive Council of the Social Democratic Federation there is this explicit statement: "Instruct your delegates to proclaim that private property in railways, shipping, factories, mines, and land must cease to be." How is a change so revolutionary to be effected? If by compensation, it means national bankruptcy; if by confiscation, it means national immorality; at the best it may involve a complete loss of national credit, and with it the loss of national honour and dignity.

(2) Again the Socialists seek to lay upon the State a burden which the State is wholly impotent to bear. Already the State is charged with so many duties that it proves unequal to its responsibilities. There have been instances enough of municipal incompetence, of municipal dishonesty. To overtax administration is to render administration inefficient. Yet "the Socialist," as a modern writer says, "would completely change the function of the Government. Instead of continuing it as the ruler over persons, he would make it the organiser and distributor of the material things in our life." In the Socialistic State the

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Government will become over-powerful ; the operatives will be employees of the Government, and it will be in their power to use their votes as menaces to their employer ; nor will the Government itself be reinforced by individual originality or enterprise.

(3) The Socialists of to-day misread human nature. They think at once too well of it and too ill. In their contempt for the self-regarding impulses of mankind, they forget that it is enlightened self-interest which is frequently the motive to improvement ; they forget that, if all men are reduced to an equality, that equality must be the level of the least competent. Yet at the same time Socialists lay an undue stress upon the material conditions of life. It is wealth and wealth alone which fills their thoughts ; they forget that “Man shall not live by bread alone.” But, necessary as bread is, there is nothing which lowers human nature so irreparably as the concentration of human thoughts and human efforts upon the accumulation of wealth and the advancement of material interests alone.

Brethren, the millennium, if it comes at all, will not begin in any Hall of Science or Socialism ; it will begin and can only begin in regenerate human hearts. “The Kingdom of God,” says the Saviour, “is within you.”

Men need reform, but the most needed of all

reforms is self-reform. The poverty and the misery of the world are solemn facts, and when all that can be said is said against the faults and the follies of parents, it remains true that the children, crying for food in the slums of great cities, make an appeal which touches the heart of humanity; they at least are innocent and helpless, they are not bearing the penalty of their own sins. Yet who doubts that the greater part of the sufferings and privations which fall upon the poor are the inevitable results of their own conduct? If it were only possible that they should obey the simple and severe laws of thrift and temperance and purity, there would be no need for a Socialistic regeneration of English life.

With all my heart I believe in the amelioration of social environment; I believe in it as giving free play to the best elements of human nature. But not science nor education nor civilisation will provide a panacea for the evils of society, apart from the reformation of human characters and human lives.

The new heaven and the new earth will be realised, so far as they are possible upon earth, only when Jesus Christ has become Lord over the hearts and consciences of men. It is He who sits upon the throne; it is He who says, "Behold, I make all things new."

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On the threshold, then, of the New Year the Church raises her voice once more with the never-failing and never-faltering message of hope. To all sorts and conditions of people, to young and old, rich and poor, employers and employed, to peers and paupers, to millionaires and mendicants, she proclaims, "Turn to God, forsake your sins, hear the promise of the Saviour, follow Him, trust in Him, aspire to Him; and there shall come upon you the spirit of the Holy One, and you shall be turned into another man."

Is the promise idle? Is it deceptive? Does not all Christian history corroborate it? Adown the vista of twenty centuries stand the figures of a countless multitude of men and women who, by the Divine grace, have been redeemed from sin, converted to God, sanctified by the love of Christ, and inspired to live a new and holy life. They are the reconcilers and regenerators of human society. They are the saints who bring heaven near to earth.

Why should not you and I be such as they have been and are? Why should not some one who has come into this House of God, as it were by chance, on the first Sunday of a new year be struck down through the sense of sin and then lifted up by the grace of heaven, why should he not from this day forth render some sacred life-long service to God and man?

“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” Yes, all things at the consummation—not all things yet. But, in so far as the regeneration of society is achieved, it will issue from the personal conversion and sanctification of human souls. That is the lesson which I would leave with you to-day. If, then, there is any prayer which it were wholly fitting to put up in this new-born year, which must, as it seems, profoundly influence the corporate life of Great Britain and of the British Empire, it will not be so much a prayer for new political or social conditions—although these too are legitimate objects of desire—but rather such a prayer as this which we offer to day not for ourselves only, or our country, or our Church, but for all citizens of the Empire all the world over, “ Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

III

THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT

“And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

“They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard ; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.”—MATT. xx. 6-7.

THE annual visit of the Lord Mayor, with the members of the City Council, the officials of the city, and a number of prominent citizens, to the cathedral for Divine Service on the first Sunday of his mayoral year is, and is felt to be, the solemn inauguration of his high office. It is a public profession that he will endeavour to perform his official duties during the year with a constant sense of indebtedness and responsibility to Almighty God. It is a promise that the Town Hall under his administration shall be, as it has so long been, the fountain-head of the religious and philanthropic activities which sweeten and sanctify the civic life.

Christianity, it is true, does not prescribe any special form of political or municipal government.

It recognises all forms of government ; it sanctifies them, when duly constituted, with a higher than human authority. In St. Paul's words, "There is no power but of God ; the powers that be are ordained of God." Brethren, it seems to me, as I cast my eyes forward into the spaces of the future, that the gravest of all dangers which threaten modern society lies in the waning respect of the classes which are governed for the authority which governs them. In its lower or milder form the spirit of contempt for authority asserts itself by disobedience to the law of the land, even among certain classes of respectable citizens whom the law offends or restrains, and not least, I am sorry to say, among a section of the clergy. In its higher or grosser form it is characterised by the title of Anarchism or Nihilism ; and of this spirit as so displayed upon the continent of Europe there are generally two distinctive notes. Firstly, it shows as little respect for the chosen head of the most broadly democratic community as for the representative of the most august and ancient monarchy. Secondly, it springs from, or is connected with, the denial of the Christian and of all religious faith. In these circumstances it is a matter of supreme moment to restore the sentiment of loyalty to government, and there is no basis upon which government so surely rests as religion. All

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religious services, then, from the Coronation of the Sovereign in Westminster Abbey downwards, in so far as they invest authority with a sacrosanct character, are pillars of social order and social unity. Let me quote a wise sentence of Lord Beaconsfield : "The Divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the Divine right of Government is the keystone of human progress, and without it government sinks into police, and a nation is degraded into a mob."

All this is true, and it is a truth brought home to the citizens of a great community, when the chief magistrate inaugurates his office by seeking in public worship the benediction of the Most High. But you will forgive me if I devote the chief part of my sermon this morning to another subject than this. There is one question which occupies above all others the minds and hearts of citizens at the present time. It is the question of labour. The question assumes many forms. Now it is the right to work, or the hardship of unemployment ; now the rate of wages ; now the relation between employers and operatives ; and now the reform of society upon conditions, whether political or commercial, which are held to offer the promise of a remedy more or less effective for human want and distress. It is impossible that the chief magistrate of a great community should

be indifferent to so vital a question. How great an influence he may bring to bear upon solving it, the events of the last few weeks can attest. The Mayor of Salford, who lays down to-day his important office amid general manifestations of regret, has played a prominent part in effecting a settlement of the controversy which had for seven weary weeks almost wholly paralysed the staple industry of Lancashire. The Lord Mayor of Manchester has set his fellow-citizens the example of seeking to relieve by special measures the penury arising from the unfortunate condition of the labour-market.

In these circumstances you will, I think, not blame me, if I draw your attention for a few minutes this morning to the parable, the one only parable, in which Our Lord may be said to deal with the problem of unemployment. It is a parable remarkable in its character, deeply instructive in the lessons which it conveys. It is often known as the parable of the labourers in the vineyard; but I would rather call it the parable of the unemployed.

There is in the parable a master or employer of labour; there are also a number of men who are described as "standing idle in the market-place." How well we seem to know those men! The market-place of to-day in Manchester is Stevenson

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Square. But the men are not like the so-called hunger-marchers who have lately started on a fatuous journey from Manchester to London ; they are only idlers out of work. When the question is put to them in the text, “ Why stand ye here all the day idle ? ” their answer is ready, “ Because no man hath hired us.”

I should perhaps be doing them less or more than justice, if I were to assume that they were particularly anxious to find work. They had not apparently troubled themselves to look for it ; they stood in the market-place, waiting on the chance of its coming to them. They were idle ; but as the sequel shows they were not unwilling to work, if work were put in their way. It may be observed, however, that although they were unemployed, they were not disturbers of the public peace. They did not interrupt traffic in the streets ; they did not destroy or injure property ; they did not come into collision with the police. So far, then, their self-restraint entitled them to sympathy. For it is impossible to urge too strongly that the unemployed men who commit breaches of order are the enemies of their own body ; they alienate public sympathy, they excite bitter feeling between class and class. I say so here, and I have said so to them when a deputation of the unemployed waited upon me shortly

after the night of September 25th,¹ and I told them that I sympathised with their position (it was a pleasure to me that they interjected, “Yes, sir, we know that”), but that they would forfeit the sympathy of Manchester, if they did not behave as respectable, law-abiding citizens. It is only just to them to admit that the misconduct at which I hinted was confined to a few persons, and was short-lived.

The preservation of public order is the primary duty of a civilised community. It is the distinction between civilisation and barbarism. However much it is right to feel for the hungry, suffering members of society, I should be prepared to take the strongest possible measures, if they seemed to be necessary, for the maintenance of order in the streets. Nor do I believe that the police of this city have used more than the minimum of force, which was indispensable on a certain critical occasion to the public weal.

But let me come back to the parable. The remedy for unemployment is work—not charity, but work. “Go ye also into the vineyard.” The Master does not say, as it were, “Here, take this money, and spend it as you will.” He says, “Go, work for it, earn it, let it be your own wage.”

¹ The night on which a conflict between the police and the unemployed took place in Manchester.

That is the true Christian political economy. If a man will not work, he shall not eat; but, if he has not got enough to eat, then give him work.

There can be no greater social error than indiscriminate almsgiving. It perpetuates and aggravates the evil which it purports to relieve. It clothes what is really a selfish spirit in the garb of unselfishness. Yet a Christian community can scarcely be said to be performing its duty, if it leaves the labour question to the mere rigid law of supply and demand; if it says to its own deserving but unfortunate members, "There is no home for you but the Union." It seems to me that in periods of acute social distress civic authorities are justified, and more than justified, in taking exceptional measures to provide employment for deserving men and women. The idle, the thriftless, the wastrels, the drunkards, the ne'er-do-weels possess no title to consideration, or they deserve it only in so far as their innocent wives and children are the victims of their evil ways; but the honourable toilers, who are out of work through no fault of their own, may fairly claim consideration and compassionate treatment. "Go ye also into the vineyard," is the Divine command. The master gives them work. He gives them also a just wage for the work which they do—"Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."

The parable requires that all should work ; but it does not require that all should do the same amount of work. It may fairly be assumed that the labourers in the parable were not all men of equal strength and capacity. The householder or employer, going out “early in the morning” into the market “to hire labourers into his vineyard,” would naturally begin by engaging the young, active, vigorous men among the unemployed ; then, as he found himself to be in need of still more labour, he would engage men of inferior quality, until at last he came at the eleventh hour to the men who had “stood all the day idle” because “nobody had hired them”—the poor half-starved derelicts of the labour-market, men who were hardly capable of doing any good work at all.

This is the reason, if I do not misunderstand it, why he paid all the labourers the same wages. The parable, indeed, is only a rough sketch ; it does not enter into details ; but at least it indicates that he who does as much as he is capable of doing does in God’s sight as much as he who does the most. It means that God often sees high desert where men can see little or none. It conveys the same moral as the parable of the widow’s mite. So it ends with the words : “I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. . . . The last

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shall be first, and the first last ; for many be called, but few chosen."

It is the thought of these last impotent labourers, unequal as they were to more than an hour's work in the day, which leads me to dwell upon the duty of the State or the municipality towards the weakest and lowliest of its members. For there are persons, whether many or few, who can do but little work, or who cannot find such work as they might do—the sick, the aged, the infirm, the crippled, the afflicted—it is they who make an irresistible appeal to human sympathy. Their necessity is no fault of their own. It may be the direct result of hard industrial conditions. Even an act so charitable in its purpose as the Employers' Liability Act or the Workmen's Compensation Act has rather augmented than lessened the difficulty which the ineffective members of society experience in obtaining employment ; for it has deterred employers from engaging servants whose physical weakness would render them especially liable to such accidents as might create a title to pecuniary compensation. Yet neither Christ nor His Church may leave these ineffective members of society in the lurch. Still, as of old, He inspires the temper of charity—not less generous, but more scientifically organised charity—for the problem of relieving distress was

comparatively simple when He was upon earth, but in the complicated state of modern society it demands perpetual thoughtfulness, lest the alms-giving, which is itself the fruit of His Spirit, should do more harm than good to the community. There is need of thought, there is need of painstaking. It is necessary not only to relieve cases which meet the eye, but to seek out cases which languish in obscurity ; for not a few of the sufferers whose lot is saddest and harshest endure hunger, and, it may be, die in silence.

Thus the wise administration of the Lord Mayor's Fund for the relief of distress has done and is doing noble service. If I may offer a word of counsel to the citizens of Manchester, I would beg them to refrain from indiscriminate charity ; I would beg them to concentrate their sympathy upon the support of a Fund administered in accordance with sound economical principles by men who are experts in the cause of philanthropy. Thus, too, it is that the City League of Help affords all citizens the means of learning where genuine stress exists, and of relieving it quietly and wisely, not without that sacred touch of personal sympathy which gives charity half its blessing and its value.

The civic duty, then, of to-day, so far as it touches the problem of unemployment, a duty

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which falls in larger or less degree upon us all, as we are “members one of another,” is :—

Firstly, to maintain the public order which is at once the sign and the safeguard of civilisation.

Secondly, to provide work as far as possible for all citizens who are willing to perform it—such work as it may be within their power to do—and to pay them for doing it.

Thirdly, to dispense scientific charity to the citizens who cannot help themselves, the victims of modern social and economic conditions, the fallen and wounded soldiers in the battle of human life.

It is impossible, therefore, to help recognising the Christian value of such provisions as the old age pensions, which will do much to maintain the blessing of home life for humble citizens who can no longer earn their living, or the free meals given with all due caution to the children who would otherwise be unfit to receive teaching in elementary schools, and who, as suffering hunger from no fault of their own, must touch the heart of even the coldest student of modern social life.

I would hope that these considerations may not seem alien from the circumstances of the time or from the character of Lord Mayor’s Sunday. But if the parable from which my text is taken is a lesson in social economics, it is also something

more. It possesses a high spiritual significance. The Householder, the owner of the vineyard, is God ; the vineyard is His world ; the labourers, all called, but, alas ! not all chosen, are we. It is not permitted to us to stand idle ; if we will not work, we are disobedient to Him who created us. There are no idlers in heaven. We must all work. "Go ye also into the vineyard," is the Divine command, and it is a command of universal application. We must all work, but we cannot all work alike ; it will be enough that we all do our best.

"It is not necessary," says S. François de Sales, "to do singular things ; but it is necessary to do common things singularly well." If we so act, we shall all receive our reward. It may not be such as we expect, but it will be just. "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive ;" nay, it may well be that the humblest toiler, if he be but faithful to duty, shall receive as much as the highest.

May this thought abide with us all as we discharge our several duties in the civic year which receives its consecration to-day ! May we do our work truly and nobly, that at evening, when the toil of the day is over, the Lord of the vineyard may vouchsafe to us the eternal reward — the heavenly crown which fadeth not away !

IV

THE KEEPING OF SUNDAY

“The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.”

—MATT. xii. 8.

A GOOD many persons who are sitting in this cathedral church to-night have probably noticed in the newspapers a recent controversy upon the question of Sunday evening concerts in the city. For the moment, but perhaps for the moment only, the concerts have been given up. They were organised, I think, a little hastily and inconsiderately, without a proper regard either to the law of the land or to the good of the community. I cannot be sorry, therefore, that they have experienced a check. But the question underlying the controversy, viz. whether it is desirable that public concerts should or should not be given on Sundays, cannot fail to awaken certain serious thoughts in the minds of Christian citizens who have no personal or sectional interests to promote, but desire only what is best for the city as a whole. And as it has been my good or bad fortune to receive somewhat urgent appeals from both parties

of controversialists, and as I do not wish to shrink from discussing with my own congregation any matter of moral and religious consequence, I shall try to-night to offer you my thoughts upon the true character and the due observance of the Christian Sunday.

There are, I think, two or three preliminary considerations indispensable to the study of the Sunday question, as it is called.

The first is that the Jewish Sabbath, the parent, if I may so describe it, of the Christian Sunday, was in its nature a local or racial institution. It could not last, and it was not designed to last, for ever.

On the Sabbath, so ran the law of the Jews, "Thou shalt do no manner of work, thou and thy son and thy daughter, thy man-servant and thy maid-servant, thy cattle and the stranger that is within thy gates." Everybody who did any work on the Sabbath, were it even such necessary work as the cooking of a meal or the lighting of a fire, was subject to death. In the Book of Numbers it is told how a man who was caught gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath Day was stoned to death for breaking the commandment of God. I am not speaking now of the rules relating to the Sabbath as they were elaborated in the Mishna and elsewhere by the refinements of successive Rabbis

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down to the time of Our Lord, I am speaking of it as it is ordained in the Old Testament ; and I say that nobody in the modern world does keep or can keep the Sabbath in such a manner. The most rigid Sabbatarian of the present day would under the Mosaic Law be put to death.

Secondly, it is clear that Jesus Christ our Lord deliberately set Himself to break down the Jewish law of the Sabbath Day. Upon the whole He was wonderfully conservative in His attitude towards the religion of His country. He submitted to the rite of circumcision ; He conformed to the Jewish law ; He frequented the sacred precincts of the temple ; He was apparently an habitual worshipper in the synagogue ; He acknowledged frankly and frequently the Divine authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. It was only in the matter of the Sabbath Day that He showed Himself to be a resolute innovator. He went out of His way to violate Sabbatarian prejudice. He worked His miracles on the Sabbath as on other days—there was no particular reason why He might not, if He would, have avoided working them on the Sabbath Day—and when He had healed a man on the Sabbath Day He expressly told him to “ take up ” his “ bed and walk ” ; nay, in the passage immediately preceding my text, He defends His disciples against the criticism of the

Pharisees for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath Day—an act which cannot be said to have been necessary, however natural it might be—and He justifies Himself upon the principle enunciated in the text itself, “In this place is one greater than the temple . . . For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day.”

In the third place, the *Acts of the Apostles* and the other writings of the New Testament prove that the Christian Sunday was originally and intentionally different from the Jewish Sabbath. It is probable enough that the early Christians, who were all Jews born and bred, were in the habit of observing both the Sabbath and the Sunday. If so, that is a fact which proves by itself the difference between the Sabbath and the Sunday. But they observed the Sabbath as commemorative of God’s rest, and the Sunday as commemorative of Christ’s resurrection. It gradually happened then that, as the Gentile element grew to be stronger than the Jewish in the Church, the Sabbath was given up in favour of the Sunday, and the day of the Lord’s resurrection became the one weekly festival which Christians in all parts of the Roman Empire and beyond it scrupulously observed.

But still the question remains, How far and in what way should a Christian of the twentieth

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century observe the sanctity of Sunday? What ought he to do, and what ought he to refrain from doing on the Sunday? It is necessary, I think, to take account of physical, moral, and spiritual facts alike in trying to decide where the path of Christian duty in relation to Sunday may be said to lie.

To begin, then, with the most elementary consideration: There can be little doubt that human nature gains something in strength and dignity when one day in the week is distinguished from the other days. As the occupations of men, among the working class especially, have in the modern world become increasingly monotonous, it has been found more and more important to provide opportunities of relaxation and refreshment. Thus the State may enact holidays—bank holidays four times in the year, and a half-holiday in every week—when its citizens may throw off the fetters of regular duty and live, if only for a brief space, a comparatively unrestrained life. But it was the Church which first instituted holidays. All holidays were originally holy days, and the most ancient and sacred of all holy days is the Sabbath or the Sunday.

Human nature being such as it is, a periodic intermission of labour is essential to the full efficiency of labour itself. Men and women do

more work by doing less ; what is lost in time is gained in power. The operative after his weekly rest on Sunday does harder and better work on all the succeeding days of the week. Let me quote here a remarkable passage from a speech delivered more than fifty years ago by Lord Macaulay upon the Bill then introduced into Parliament for limiting the labour of young persons in factories to ten hours a day. How strangely moderate such a Bill seems in the light of recent history ! " We are not poorer," he says, " but richer, because we have through many ages rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost. While industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrow, while the exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machines, in comparison with which all the contrivances of the Watts and the Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labours on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed corporal vigour."

Such, then, is the incalculable benefit of the weekly Christian Sunday. But I ask you : Do you feel certain that the Sunday is quite safe ;

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may it not be lost, and, if it is once lost, may it not be irrecoverable? Look at the fierce competition of modern industry, and tell me, Is it not only too probable that some employer of labour might say to himself one day, "There is a boom in trade just now, I may as well take full advantage of it. If I keep my mills going seven days a week, I shall manufacture more goods, I shall do a better trade, I shall realise a higher profit upon my capital, I may even pay my hands better wages ;" or that some operative, under the compulsion of providing for his family, or the fear of losing his employment, may say, "I will make hay while the sun shines ; I will work on Sundays as well as on week-days ; I shall have more money to spend when the slack time comes upon my wife and family, or, if I choose, upon myself" ? All this may happen ; it is only too likely to happen ; and for a time the citizens may be or may seem to be more prosperous, but the end will be national degeneracy.

Lord Beaconsfield was right in saying that no motive would in the long run prove sufficiently powerful to maintain the weekly day of rest, except the religious motive. If there are any working men who hear my sermon, or who may read a report of it in the newspapers, I would beg them to cling to the Sunday as the charter of

their personal freedom, and to cling to it on the ground that it is an institution ordained and hallowed by the sanction of religious faith.

May I not add that, if we recognise the value of Sunday as a day of rest (I will at present say no more) in relation to the national life, we must all be prepared as citizens and as Christians to make some sacrifice of our own wishes for the sake of maintaining the character of Sunday ?

It surprises me at times that so many people who do not disbelieve in the value of Sunday are so ready to violate the Sunday for their own ends. They seem to think that everybody ought to keep Sunday except themselves ; or perhaps they do not think at all, but act with that random, thoughtless levity which is the root of half the evil in the world. Yet nothing is more certain than that Sunday, as a day of rest, cannot be maintained if half the nation does not consent to maintaining it. If half the nation breaks the Sunday, whether for labour or for amusement, the other half must break it too. “We are members one of another,” and that membership remains a fact, whether we like it or not. If a number of persons spend Sunday in travelling by railway, or in boating on the Thames, or in giving social entertainments, then a number of other persons—probably a much larger number

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—must work on their account. And the sad, selfish fact of modern life is that the persons who most lightly break the Sunday are often they who least need to break it. It may be a good thing that poor people, and especially the children of poor people, should now and again be taken on Sundays out of the slums of crowded cities into the country or to the seaside. But that rich people, who can enjoy themselves on six days in the week, should persist in enjoying themselves on the seventh at the cost of denying the possibility of worship or repose to their dependents—that is an instance of the thoughtless, reckless, anti-social temper which is perhaps the most disheartening feature of modern civilisation.

Sunday, then, even as a day of rest, is a national boon ; it is a boon which may easily be forfeited ; and, if it is once lost, it may never be recovered. Nor is there any motive but enlightened Christian patriotism which can permanently ensure the observance of Sunday.

How, then, should the Christian Sunday be spent ?

The answer seems to lie in the true Christian name of the Sunday. “ Sabbath ” is a Jewish word, “ Sunday ” is a pagan word. The true name of Sunday is “ the Lord’s Day.” That is a beautiful and expressive designation. “ I was in the spirit,”

says St. John in the *Revelation*, "on the Lord's Day."

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day." Yes, but He alone is Lord. If He by His sole authority can transform the Sabbath, none other can transform it. It becomes the day reserved for Him, consecrated to Him, a day designed for vitalising the union between Him and the individual Christian soul.

Does anybody ask, then, what is the right way of spending Sunday? I cannot reply, Keep it like the Jewish Sabbath as a day of rigid, inexorable law. The true reply is, Keep it as a day for drawing near to Him. Nothing can be wrong on the Sunday which places the soul of man in a closer, happier, and more sacred relation to Him. Nothing can be right which sets a cloud between Him and the soul. For Sunday is the festival of His resurrection—it is the day on which He peculiarly calls us to rise with Him into the heavenly places.

If, then, the essential principle of Sunday is that it is the day on which the soul of man should be drawn nearer to God and to Christ, there will not, I think, be much difficulty in determining how a Christian man or woman ought to spend it. The first duty of Sunday will clearly be worship. It is not necessary now to argue what the particular form of worship should be.

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The *Acts of the Apostles* shows that the Holy Feast, which was originally known as “the breaking of bread,” was a regular characteristic of primitive Christian worship on the first day of the week. But worship, and, above all, public worship, is essential to the recognition of man’s duty to God and to the cultivation of his spiritual faculty.

What is it, then, in effect that a person does or says, if he studiously and habitually spends his Sundays in business or amusement, without any participation in the offices of Divine worship? Does he not practically say to all people who know and see his action, “I do not believe in God,” or “If I believe in Him, I do not think Him worth worshipping,” or “I do not feel any need of the strength which He gives to His worshippers”? Does he not say: “I wish to show that the country, the Empire, of which I am a citizen, will, in my judgment, be fully as strong and upright and lofty if the fear of God is banished from the minds of Englishmen and Englishwomen, as if they try to do their duty from day to day, and from year to year, in the consciousness of dependence upon and responsibility to an Almighty and Omniscient and Everlasting Judge”? That is practically what a man’s action signifies, if he holds aloof from the public worship of God.

You and I, brethren, when we come together for Divine Service in this historic sanctuary which we know and love so well, make our public profession of allegiance to God as the Author of our being, and to Jesus Christ our Lord, His only Son. We find, I hope, a refined and sanctified pleasure in the music and ritual, the prayers and praises, and even the sermons. We gain a new spiritual strength by worshipping together. For the law of association operates in the religious as truly as in the political sphere. We acknowledge our common hope and our common end in life; and this acknowledgment is itself an inspiration. But, above all, we declare with silent emphasis before the eyes of the world that we desire to live, not as creatures of a day, but as children of God, redeemed by Christ, and the heirs of a glorious immortality.

So, then, the first rule for keeping Sunday is this—Set aside a regular part of the day for Divine worship. For the soul of man, as much as his body or his intellect, needs culture. It is by physical exercise that men become athletes, by intellectual that they become scholars, by spiritual that they become saints. As well might a man who had never used his limbs or his mind expect to become pre-eminent in strength or knowledge, as one who never cultivates his spiritual faculty

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expect to understand the deep mysteries of God. "He revealeth His secret unto His servants." It is by prayer, by faith, by sacrifice, by devotion that the soul of man mounts heavenwards; if it does not so aspire, it will sink earthwards. Thus the primary place in the Christian observance of Sunday belongs, and must of right belong, to worship.

But the best of Christians cannot spend all Sunday in church. What is he to do, then, during the residue of the day?

Brethren, it is impossible to lay down absolute rules. To insist upon such rules would be to convert the Sunday into a Sabbath. The Christian is not subject to a sharply defined law. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

So long as the primary obligation of worship on Sunday is fulfilled, I cannot condemn any one who may spend a part of his Sunday in some honourable recreation, especially if he is one who works hard all the week and needs to recuperate body and mind alike on the day of rest. Yet his spending of the Sunday, or of any part of the Sunday, must not be selfish or Godless. Sunday is "the Lord's day"; whatever draws the soul away from Him is unworthy of the day. Only it is well to remember that Sunday may be profaned in

many different ways and in many different places. It may be as sinful to spend a part of the Sunday in uncharitable gossip as in novel-reading. It may be as sinful to spend it at a luxurious dinner-party as in a public-house.

There is ground of thankfulness, therefore, and not of complaint, in the legislative restrictions which guard the sanctity of the Lord's Day. The general opening of theatres and music-halls on Sunday would tend to deteriorate the national life; the closing of public-houses on Sunday, wherever it has been tried, has proved a blessing, and nobody has ever proposed to reverse it.

Is this Puritanism? I know not; but, if it is, it seems to me that this land of ours was never stronger, better, or purer than in the days when men walked under the consciously avowed presence of an Almighty Power.

I would there were a little more of the Puritan spirit in the England of to-day. Yet Puritanism needs the sobering principle of common sense. You and I may experience no need of Sunday concerts. Our music, our recreation, the joy and peace of our souls, we may find in this cathedral. But it may be that for others the choice lies not between the church and the concert-room, but between the concert-room and the street or the public-house. It was only a few nights ago that

I listened to a working-man pleading earnestly for more light and liberty and a greater opportunity of innocent happiness on Sunday. I cannot therefore wholly condemn Sunday concerts. He who abrogated the Jewish law of the Sabbath would not, I think, approve another such law in the present day. But I have pleaded with the organisers of the Sunday concerts, and, if they will suffer me, I will plead yet again, that, if such concerts are instituted in the city, they should be designed not for the profit of the persons who give them; they should be kept clear of any political or Socialistic objects; they should be so arranged as not to conflict with the hours of Divine Service in the churches. Whether the organisers of the concerts will listen to me or not, I cannot tell. If they will, it will be in my power to co-operate with them. For I believe that people who are drawn out of the streets to hear the strains of sacred music are lifted to a somewhat higher life, and are led a little nearer to Jesus Christ. If they will not, it will be my duty to oppose them.

But, O my brethren, let us who believe in Jesus Christ try to live a Christ-like life. Let men "take knowledge" of us, as of the disciples in old time, that we have "been with Jesus."

“The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day.”

If we claim for others a liberty on Sunday, and still more if we claim it for ourselves, let the claim be made in His name and for His sake. “In this place is one greater than the temple.” To Him let us consecrate our pleasures no less than our duties, our recreation no less than our religion. Let us spend the day which bears His name in attuning our hearts to His holy law; let us so refresh and renew our souls with the solemn rest of the Sunday on earth that we may be prepared to enter after this life upon the fruition of the eternal Sabbath, which remains in heaven for the people of God.

V

THE DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO LAW

“And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee.”—MATT. xvii. 24-27.

IT often seems to me that in difficult times, when low-lying clouds obscure the strict and solemn path of duty, Christians would do well if they fixed their eyes a little more carefully on the personal example of Jesus Christ Himself. For we cannot well do wrong, if we do as He did. To imitate His action and to merit His approbation has been declared even by persons living outside the Christian Church, such as John Stuart Mill, to be a high and, indeed, the highest rule of life; nay, did He not Himself say as the first word of His ministry, “Follow Me,” and as almost the last

word, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"?

It is in this view that with regard to a particular question upon which the minds of Christian men are sorely divided in the present day I will draw your attention for a brief while this evening to a remarkable incident in the story of His life.

I do not know if the words which I read in my text, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" will necessarily convey a true impression to all the members of this congregation. What was the "tribute" which the collectors asked Our Lord to pay? It was not an ordinary civil tax imposed by the Government for the purpose of collecting revenue, although it was so understood by many fathers of the Church in early days—*e.g.* by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, and Jerome. Had it been such a civil tax, then Our Lord in paying it would have shown His loyalty to the Government under which He lived, but nothing more. The "tribute," however, or "didrachma" as it is called in the Greek, the "half-shekел" in the Revised Version, was a sum of eighteenpence payable by all Jews throughout the world for the expenses of the temple at Jerusalem. It was therefore a religious tax, like the tithe, levied under the authority or sanction of the Government for the maintenance of a particular church or creed.

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Now let me ask you to consider the relation in which Our Lord stood to Judaism. He was by human birth a Jew; Judæa was His fatherland. He was as familiar with the temple at Jerusalem as you and I are with this cathedral church of Manchester. But in respect of the whole Jewish religion He was a reformer; He knew and taught something better than Judaism, something that was fated in the Providence of God to supplant the Judaic creed and ritual. However strongly, then, He might recognise the historical and patriotic claims of the temple upon His allegiance, it was impossible that He should not feel Himself in some degree estranged from the faith and practice of the temple worship.

There were, in fact, a good many reasons why He might have shrunk from paying the "tribute."

In the first place, the payment does not seem to have been obligatory in law. The collectors of the tax, "they that received tribute money," as they are called in the text, did not, I think, present a demand for the money, as a tax-collector nowadays sends a demand note to any one of us. They did not indeed approach our Lord Himself, but they came to St. Peter, asking him: "Doth not your Master pay the tribute?" It may not unnaturally be inferred that, if St. Peter

had replied, "No, He does not," there would have been an end of the matter.

Secondly, it is evident that Our Lord did not regard Himself as morally bound to make the payment. For He argues with St. Peter thus: "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute—of their own children or of strangers? And when he receives the answer, "Of strangers," He adds, "Then are the children free," or, if I may interpret his argument: "You call upon Me to pay a tax for the worship of God. You might as well expect a king to tax the princes of the blood royal. I am no subject, no tributary of the King My Father; I am His Son, His only begotten Son, and as His Son, I am free from His taxes."

Not only so, but Our Lord might easily have pleaded that He could not in conscience bring Himself to pay this particular tax. How could He who was greater than the temple, and Himself was the true Temple, contribute money to the support of a temple built with hands? How could He, who would give His life as a ransom for the souls of all men, pay what was in effect ransom-money for His own soul? How could He conscientiously support, when He had come on earth to supplant, the whole Jewish religious economy?

And yet, if St. Matthew's narrative is correct, not only did Our Lord pay the tax for Himself as well as for St. Peter, but He wrought what looks like a miracle in order to pay it. "Nevertheless," He says to St. Peter, "lest we should offend them," *i.e.* lest we should cause them offence, and so lead them or any of them to do wrong, "go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish which first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money," literally the Greek coin called a stater, which was worth three shillings, or twice the amount of the individual tribute; "that take and give unto them for Me and thee."

Brethren, you will probably agree with me in thinking that the incident of my text affords a striking exemplification of Our Lord's unwillingness to make use of His exceptional religious position as justifying resistance, I will not say to any legal, but even to any conventional taxation.

It is remarkable all through His life how sedulously careful He was to keep clear of conflict with the political or civil authority under which He lived. With that authority He lived in peace, when it would have been so easy for Him to get into trouble. It was not to the political order of His day, but to the religious prejudice, that He was opposed.

In this respect at least, if not always in others, the Christians of the first and second centuries were true to His example. They sternly refused to sacrifice or compromise their Christian faith ; they were ready to meet death, and to meet it with joy, rather than to throw a few grains of incense on the altar of the emperor ; but they never accounted it their duty to dislocate the system of the body politic by declining on conscientious grounds to fulfil the pecuniary obligations of citizenship. Living as they then lived in a heathen society under such emperors as a Nero or a Domitian, yet they paid the taxes, and all the taxes which the State demanded of them, whether they were municipal or imperial taxes, with equal contentment. For it was the law of Christ's kingdom, and of Christians as the subjects of His kingdom, to reform the State by converting individuals, and not to relieve individuals by disobeying the State. Obedience to parents, to civic authority, to the emperor himself, was regarded as a high Christian duty. "Let every soul," says St. Paul, "be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God ;" and the followers of Jesus Christ in rendering their obedience "were subject," as St. Paul again says, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

Times have changed ; and there are a good many Christians to-day who plead conscience as affording an excuse for defiance of the law. They say in effect, “ We object conscientiously to the law ; therefore we will not obey it ; we should feel we were acting wrongly if we did obey it,” and they assume that their objection is necessarily moral.

But is every man’s conscience, whether fully or feebly enlightened, the final arbiter of right and wrong ? The characteristic of conscience is that its dictates are cogent, not that they are correct. A man’s conscience may be as erroneous as his intelligence. Some of the worst enemies of human society have been among the most conscientious of mankind. The Inquisitors were conscientious men ; Torquemada was to all appearance an extremely conscientious man. The Thugs in India acted obediently to conscience ; yet it was found necessary to stamp them out, and their consciences with them, under the heel of the British Government.

Conscience, in fact, is like a clock ; it may be right or wrong ; and if you follow it when it goes wrong, or do not set it right, it may lead you and other people too, into serious trouble. It happened sometimes, when I was a schoolmaster, that a boy who arrived late for a lesson would

plead as an excuse that his watch was wrong. But the obvious answer was that he was master of his own watch, and he ought to have kept it right; if it was wrong, he must expect to suffer for it. There are some people who keep their consciences wrong, and apparently pride themselves on keeping them wrong, or at least take no pains to set them right. May I illustrate my point by quoting a passage from a book well known, I think, to the majority of men and women in Manchester, the late Canon Parkinson's story, "The Old Church Clock"? The narrator of the story tells how he got into conversation with an elderly man who "was gazing steadfastly at the old church clock over the battlements of the new Victoria Bridge. He had his own watch in his hand, of ample size and antique appearance. I saw that he was going to regulate its time by that of the venerable old time-teller on the tower of the Collegiate Church. 'My friend,' said I, taking out my own watch at the same time to give some force to my words, 'that clock is six minutes too slow.' 'It may be so, sir,' said he, looking at me quite in the way that I had looked at him, *viz.* as an old acquaintance, 'it may be so, but I always set my watch by that clock every week, whether it be right or wrong. . . . It is now the oldest friend I have in Manchester, and I

keep up my acquaintance with it by setting my watch by it every Saturday, and with God's blessing, as long as I live in Manchester (and it is very likely now that I may live here till I die), I will set my watch by the clock, be it right or wrong.””

Are there not persons who treat their conscience as the old gentleman in the story treated his watch—do they not set their consciences to the wrong time? Can they be surprised, then, that their consciences should mislead them?

I am apt to wonder whether such persons, when they treat the dictates of their conscience as infallible guides, have ever read Jeremy Taylor's celebrated treatise entitled *Ductor Dubitantium*. Many of the rules there given, especially in the First Book, are singularly applicable to the problem which I am considering. It will be enough to quote the following extracts from Rule VII. : “Conscience in respect of its information or as it relates to its object, taken materially and in the nature of the thing, is either true or false, right or wrong. True, when it is rightly informed and proceeds justly ; false when it is deceived.” “The conscience binds because it is heartily persuaded, not because it is truly informed ; not because it is right, but because it thinks so.” “Our conscience is not a good judge unless we

be truly informed and know it. . . . If we be confident and yet deceived, the uncertainty and hesitation is taken off, but we are still very miserable. For we are like an erring traveller who, being out of the way and thinking himself right, spurs his horse and runs full speed. He that comes behind is nearer to his journey's end."

If you and I aspire to behave as good citizens and good Christians, it is our duty to set our conscience right, and not to be guided by it until it is set right.

May I, then, suggest to you the way—the only sure way—of setting and keeping your conscience right? It is to lay down for yourself the clear and simple rule of so acting that, if all other persons under similar conditions were to act in the same manner, the city, or the community, or the world would be the gainer, and not the loser, by your example.

For it is quite certain that you cannot have a conscience all to yourself. Other people have consciences just as sensitive as your own. Whatever law you lay down for your own conscience you must lay down with equal authority for theirs. One man feels a conscientious objection to paying taxes for denominational or undenominational religious teaching in elementary schools;

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another feels the same objection to paying taxes which may go to the support of the army, or of vaccination, or of the liquor trade, or of the Contagious Diseases Act. There is no conceivable legislation which does not or may not inflict hardship upon the conscience of some body of citizens. But civilised government becomes possible only when the citizens living under a democratic constitution submit to legislative enactments passed, however much against their own will, by the governing authority of the realm. Not enough regard is paid, I sometimes think, to this plain duty of a good citizen and a good Christian.

What is the part of a good citizen in a Christian land? Surely it is not to get as much as he can out of the State, and to give nothing or as little as possible in return. He owes the best blessings of his life to the settled government under which he lives. The supremacy of the law is the distinguishing feature between civilisation and barbarism. Upon it he depends for his personal safety, for his liberty of speech and action, for the acquisition and transmission of his property, for his facilities of communication, for the daily comforts and embellishments of his life, nay, actually for the regular and certain supply of his food. Is he to make no civic acknowledgment of these benefits? And what acknowledgment is so

possible or so natural as obedience to the law? And when is such obedience so meritorious as if he dislikes and disapproves the law, although he obeys it from an enlightened sense of public duty? It is urged that Hampden, at a critical point of English history, refused obedience to the law. How strangely is Hampden's conduct misunderstood by persons who are apparently interested in misunderstanding it! He did not disobey the law, he did not refuse payment of a tax legally imposed upon him; the Ship-Money against which he protested was an illegal impost, and he appealed to the law against it. Nor did Hampden live under a democratic constitution, when the law-breakers are themselves the law-makers, and a statute enacted to-day may by the popular will be rescinded to-morrow. His stormy life was spent in the days of the Star Chamber, when an arbitrary monarch usurped the right of levying taxes without the consent of the people. The suburban Hampdens of to-day, whether Churchmen or Nonconformists, in their resistance to the law do not imitate but contravene the spirit of Hampden. Above all they act in oblivion, if not in disregard, of their Master's principle as expressed in the words of the text, "Lest we should offend them," *i.e.* lest we should set them a scandalous example; for they are doing what

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if everybody did it—and everybody has as good a right to do it as they have—would convert civilised society into a chaos. For it is one of the paradoxical instances which reveal the unforeseen consequences of an evil example that there is not an argument which the Ritualists use in defence of their resistance to the Privy Council but the Nonconformists use it in defence of their resistance to the law of the land.

Secondly, what is the part of a good Christian?

I have tried to show you the law-abiding character of Christianity; I have tried to show it by the example of Jesus Christ Himself. What was the general tenor of His moral teaching? Was it that His followers, if they should suffer any wrong, were to rise against it and resist it without any appreciation of the consequences which their action might bring upon their country or their Church? Was it not rather that they should lay upon themselves the greatest possible restraint in the cause of allegiance to duly constituted authority, and that, even if they were the victims of wrong, they should submit to it, until it could be legally redressed, as an element in the discipline of the Christian character? Let me remind you of the Apostolic precept: “This is thankworthy if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory

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is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps."

So I end my sermon, as I began it, with the example of Jesus Christ Himself. Could any lesson be more impressive than His life? He came upon earth—He who was the very Son of God—and it might have been anticipated that His advent would be the signal for the dissolution of civil society; but He moved among men as a humble member of an earthly commonwealth; He uttered no insurrectionary or unconstitutional doctrines; He was in the truest sense a good citizen.

It has been my effort in this sermon to set before you one aspect of His example as bearing upon a special line of Christian duty. It is my hope that I have spoken no such word as may justly offend the susceptibilities of any religiously minded person within this cathedral or outside it. My wish has been not to criticise and condemn individuals, but to examine a difficult and delicate point of conduct in the light of the spirit of Jesus Christ. For if it is possible to show

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what He would have done, there is no longer any question what we ought to do. To be Christ-like is the holiest ambition of all Christians. May God vouchsafe to us to know Him more truly, to love Him more dearly, and to dwell with Him eternally in heaven !

VI

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

“Then there were brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

—MATT. xix. 13-14.

My subject this evening is education. It seems to me, and perhaps it may seem to you, that, when a subject so serious as this is, in its bearing upon the moral and spiritual welfare of the nation, occupies men's minds, I ought not to shrink from offering in this cathedral such a contribution as lies within my power towards the formation of a sober Christian judgment upon it.

Let me, then, begin by noting, as a strange and almost sad feature of the text, that it is the disciples of the Lord who keep the little children away from Him. What a paradox lies here! We should not have felt surprise, I think, if the disciples had been trying to bring the children to Jesus, and had been rebuked and resisted by His enemies. But the disciples themselves are they who stand in the children's way.

It is not Jesus. He says, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me." He is only too willing to lay His hands upon them and bless them.

It is not the parents. They must have brought the children, or have let them be brought, to Him.

It is not even the unbelievers—the Agnostics of the day. There is no intimation that they objected to the wish of the parents or to the loving response of the Saviour.

No! the disciples, the disciples alone, stand between the children and the Divine Friend of the children. "There were brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them and pray: and the disciples rebuked them."

Brethren, some nineteen or twenty centuries have run their course since Christ gave His blessing to the children; and since then He has become at least in name the Lord of the civilised Christian world. Yet even now it may not be wholly inopportune to ask, Does history repeat itself? Are the disciples of Christ still in some sense the enemies of His little ones? And may there still be occasion for the voice of Him who rebuked the rebuking disciples to say once more, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me"?

I ask the question; I do not venture to answer

it. All that I will try to do is to lay before you in this sermon some considerations vitally affecting, as I think, the educational problem of to-day.

Of these the first is that the great difference between man and man, and between nation and nation, is, and will more and more prove to be, whether they do or do not believe in their responsibility to the law and will of Almighty God.

It is impossible to enlarge now upon this paramount belief of the human mind and the human soul in its manifold aspects—its illumination, its solace, its encouragement, its sanctification. But in view of the national weal, and of the moral life of the nation as a whole, is it too much to say that the acknowledgment of Almighty God is the sovereign guarantee for man's ultimate allegiance to the moral law? There is more nonsense, perhaps, talked about human nature than about any subject in the world. What is the human nature that you and I know without us and within us, in the world and in our own hearts? Is it like some pure translucent lake, never once ruffled unless by the zephyr breeze of fancy, a lake untroubled by sin or shame or tumult of desire? Is it that—or do the passionate winds sweep over it, and lash it at times to an ungovernable fury, until it seems as though no power in heaven or on earth could bid it "Be still"? Are we so strong and sure, so safe

against all evil, that we can afford to dispense with the Divine grace and guidance? Do not our hearts tell us that we are not far, no, not the best of us, from the worst sin, that we do evil and hate ourselves for doing it, and yet do it again and again, and that we must cling for dear life to every sanction which binds us to the immutable rock of duty? But the strongest of all moral sanctions is the fear of God.

Brethren, there are many opinions which I understand, although I do not entertain them; but if anybody tells me that the world of men stands in no need of moral sanctions, he seems to be ignorant of human nature; and if he tells me that a man believing in a God, who sees every act and thought of his being, and will at the last bring him into judgment for them all, possesses no stronger motive to right conduct than one whose view of life is blankly materialistic, he seems to be destitute of common sense, and it is idle to reason with him.

Does some one in the congregation suggest that men who believe in God have often been guilty of great sins? It is so; I know and I grieve that it is so. The strong waves of passion overleap at times the breakwater which opposes them, like the swelling waves of the ocean; but is that a reason for doing away with the breakwater, or for raising and strengthening it that it may stand firm in the

tempestuous day? Human nature needs the strongest and deepest principles of morality; but none is so strong or so deep as the fear of God.

The first conclusion, then, to which I come is this: Let all the children of England be educated in the fear of God. If it were not possible to wring from a reluctant State any greater concession than that over the portals of the Elementary Schools should be inscribed, as it were, the motto, "Fear God and keep His Commandments," and that within the schools God's holy Name should be reverently made known by the teachers to their pupils—even that teaching, though it is so inadequate, I would thankfully accept, for it is the ultimate basis of all religion.

But Jesus Christ said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." This nation of England is a Christian nation. It believes in God, it believes also in Christ; nay, it believes not in God merely, but in the God whom Christ revealed—God the all-holy and all-loving, the Father, the Saviour, and the Comforter. To be taught the fear of God, then, is something; it is not everything, but it is much. It is far better than to be left without the knowledge or the recognition of Him in a difficult world. But to be taught the faith of God as our Father, and of Christ as our Exemplar and our Saviour, is still more. It is not, indeed, all

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that Churchmen wish to teach. But the child who has learnt that faith at his mother's knees, or even in school, is widely, if not wholly, different from the child brought up in mere paganism.

It seems to me at times that some Christians, whether within or without the Church of England, would not speak as they do about Christianity if they had lived for a few years among the heathen.

You hear them decry perhaps the Christianity of England. They say that England is not a Christian land. No doubt it is not Christian, so far as its citizens do not all acknowledge the Christian faith, or do not all live the Christian life. But in England, as in every Christian country, there is an atmosphere—a Christian atmosphere—which absolutely differentiates it from the countries where the name of Jesus Christ is not known or is not reverenced.

You hear them declaim, perhaps, against the idea of a common Christianity. They tell you such a thing does not exist and cannot exist, it is an idle fancy, a vain chimera, a pious hope, or must I rather say a hope which is not pious?—for it has actually been called “a moral monstrosity.” But is it so? Is there, then, no belief which all Christians agree in holding? Is it not rather true that, if there is no such thing as a common

Christianity, there can be no Christianity at all? After all, the test of language is frequently decisive in questions of fact; and if there are certain persons or nations called Christian in contradistinction to others who are not Christian, then it is, and it must be, in virtue of some common property that those persons and nations enjoy the special title of Christian. But that common property can only be an accepted body of religious beliefs and moral principles.

Brethren, it is possible to make too much of the differences between Christians. They loom too large before men's eyes in Christendom; they tend to shut out the view of Christianity itself. But let the religion of Christ be set down beside other religions—beside Islam, or Hinduism, or Confucianism, or Buddhism—and it proves to be a fact so commanding in itself, so distinctive that the heathen are apt to ask whether a person is a Christian or not, and they almost forget to ask what is the special denomination of Christians to which he belongs.

Again, you may hear some Christians protesting that it is useless, or worse than useless, to read the Bible or parts of the Bible to little children, or to give them simple teaching upon the Bible, unless at the same time they receive the authoritative interpretation of the Church.

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Now, I do not pretend that the Bible in all its parts is self-explanatory ; I do not deny that it needs explanation, or that the Church is the authority best qualified to explain it. But what I would urge with all the force of earnest conviction is that children who have received the most elementary Christian teaching—nay, who have listened to the mere reading of the Gospels—are far better off than they would be or could be if they had never heard of Jesus Christ or of His wonderful words and works at all. Is it possible to suppose that the record of His Divine life is not in itself potent to touch the hearts and souls of children ? Is it possible that they should look upon His goodness, His sympathy, His holiness, that they should read how He came from heaven at the sacrifice of His Divine glory, and lived on earth as a poor man, and had not where to lay His head, and went about doing good, and then suffered and died upon the cross, and rose from the grave and ascended into heaven—that they should get to know all this, and not be the better for it in their after-lives ? Let us ask ourselves, What was it that the children of my text heard—they of whom the Saviour said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me” ? They listened to His words ; that was all. He spoke, and they looked up into His face, and

they listened to Him. His visible personal presence is withdrawn now from the world of men, but His words remain ; they are enshrined in the Gospels ; and the children who listen to them to-day, to the parables of the lost sheep or the prodigal son, or to the story of His Passion, are, apart from His personal presence, exactly in the same position as they who may have sat at His feet eighteen centuries ago on the flowery hillside of Nazareth, or beside the smiling waters of the Galilean lake, or who may have stood beside the cross when He suffered on Calvary. And, when all is said, the explanation of His words, whoever imparts it, may at least conceivably be wrong ; but His words themselves must be right.

Brethren, the considerations which I have now laid before you lead to this result ; that the first principle of a true Christian educational policy is to secure for all, or for the largest possible number of the children of the land, an education, even if it be but rudimentary, in the fear of Almighty God, and in the love and worship and imitation of His Son Jesus Christ.

And now let me go on to say that it is the State, and the State alone, which can exercise a compelling power in the matter of education.

It is doubtful whether Churchmen, and other people too, realise that in the course of human

history the State has succeeded to a part, and a large part, of the responsibility which was once adequately discharged by the Church. Yet this is so, and it can be seen to be true not in education only but in such matters as in the relief of the poor, especially of late by pensions provided for old age, in the relation of labour and capital, or in social legislation. I am far from saying that the Church has necessarily lost her influence in these or other departments of civic life, but her influence has changed its character. She is no longer able, even if she desires, to threaten, or dictate, or impose discipline ; she must content herself with suggestion and persuasion.

It is certain, then, that the Church to-day is impotent to bring all, or nearly all, the children of the land to school. She may open schools, she may succeed by a strong effort in keeping them alive ; but, apart from the compulsion of the State, the mass of the children would not be found within her schools or within any schools.

Brethren, one need not be a deep student of human nature to apprehend that parents who do not care about religion will not put themselves out, except under compulsion, to send their children to religious teaching, and that the children, if they or their parents have to choose between an hour's religious teaching and an hour's play or the chance of

earning a few pence, will not improbably be found in the playground or in the streets. Yet the children of parents who are careless in the matter of religion are the very children whom it is desirable in the highest interest of society to bring under the sacred spell of religious teaching. They live—these poor little street-arabs—in the slums of great cities, crowded into single rooms amidst an unhealthy and demoralising environment ; they never hear, perhaps, the name of God or of Christ, or if they hear it, it is used in oaths rather than in prayers ; they seem to enjoy no chance of living a Christian life. These are the children whom the State, and the State alone, can hope to imbue even with the elements of religious knowledge and feeling ; and it is they who need these elements most that are the least likely, except for the action of the State, to receive them, and who, if they are brought up without them, will in the coming days only too often prove to be the dangers and scourges of human society. These poor children are not denominationalists ; they do not know and cannot understand the differences between one body of Christians and another ; all that it is possible or necessary to teach them is that they must answer for their conduct to the Almighty Judge, and that they must try to direct their lives—as in childhood, so afterwards in mature years—by

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the example of the gracious and holy Saviour who died for them upon the cross. It is for these children that I plead. Think of them, suffer them to come to Jesus, that He may take them in His arms, put His hands upon them and bless them.

Religious teaching, then, is the supreme educational interest of the State. That the children, who will be the citizens of the future, should be all trained in the fear of God and in the love of Christ is a principle which will make all the difference to the future of the country. What may be the precise colour or tone of the Christian teaching imparted to the children is, so long as the teaching remains distinctly Christian, not the primary, but the secondary, consideration. I do not mean that it is not highly important; but it is unimportant relatively to the distinction between religious and Christian teaching on the one hand, and the entire absence of religious and Christian teaching on the other. Children, however young, are capable of apprehending the simple faith in God and in Christ; but nothing, except the wilfulness of a teacher, can force upon their minds a consciousness of the unhappy differences which separate Churchmen from Non-conformists, or one body of Nonconformists from another.

There is, I think, room for some surprise at

finding how many partisans of religious education shut their eyes to the grave and growing danger of secularism. It is taken for granted that the secular solution of the educational difficulty is, at least in England, impracticable. But one who reflects that this is the solution generally adopted in the colonies of the British Empire, that it is the solution approved by an overwhelming majority in the Labour Party, and that many men of religious feeling, out of sheer weariness at the apparently unending conflict between the rival Christian denominations, are reluctantly coming to acquiesce in it as the path of least resistance, may well reflect that it is worth while to make a large sacrifice of his own prepossessions and convictions in order to avoid an evil so lamentable and so fatal. To me, at least, it seems little less than an axiom that all the children in the country should receive a religious education, and that any religious education, if it is Christian, is far better than none.

But the question then arises, Upon what system and by what method is religion to be taught in the schools?

And here there are two policies, differing one from the other in character and in intention. It is unfortunate—for indeed it is unnecessary—that they should respectively express, one, the prevail-

ing opinion of the Church, and the other the prevailing opinion of Nonconformity. No doubt there are some Nonconformists who are denominationalists, as there are some Churchmen who are favourable to undenominational teaching; but, upon the whole, denominationalism is the policy of the Church, as it is of the Roman Catholic Church, and undenominationalism is the policy of Nonconformity.

The one policy is that all children should receive at the cost of the State religious education in accordance with the exact beliefs of their parents; in other words, it is that every parent of a child should state whether he wishes his children to be educated in the tenets of the Church of England or of the Roman Catholic Church, or of one of the Nonconformist bodies, or of the Unitarians, or of the Jews, or otherwise. Let me say at once that this proposal does not seem to me to be in any sense unjust. There is, as I hold, no injustice in paying for denominational teaching out of the rates; nor can a parent be blamed for requiring that his child should not be taught what he himself holds to be untrue in religion. The doubt which suggests itself to my mind is not whether the proposal is just, but whether it is practicable.

It is impossible, I think, upon reflection to

deny that the policy of teaching at the public expense a great variety of religious creeds is, especially if it is regarded from the side of the State, liable to certain grave objections:—

1. It will sometimes, and perhaps often, be impossible in a rural district or in a "single school area," as it is called—nay, it may be impossible even in a town—to satisfy the demands of all parents. For if conscience in the matter of religion is so sacred that whatever religious truth is taught in the schools must be the whole truth and nothing but the truth, as each parent may regard it, then the conscience of an individual is as sacred as the conscience of a number of people; and to deny a single Roman Catholic or Unitarian the opportunity of learning the religious creed of his parent is an injustice as plain as any which Churchmen suffer in undenominational schools. But how will it be possible to provide as many different religious teachers as there are different forms of religious creed?

2. This policy assumes that all the different Nonconformist bodies can be lumped together for the purpose of religious teaching; Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists of all kinds, and others are to be treated as one body. But it is obvious that they cannot be so treated, except with their own consent. It is indeed not a little

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paradoxical that the Baptists should ever have consented to throw in their lot with the advocates of infant baptism, for they differ from them upon a vital point of doctrine almost as widely as some Churchmen differ from the orthodox Nonconformists. But the Nonconformists have never professed to regard undenominational teaching as being what they themselves like best ; they accept it only as being the best that is possible. If, then, the State lays down the principle of the parents' right in religious education, I cannot conceive that the different Nonconformist bodies will not soon or late claim different forms of Nonconformist teaching.

3. The denominational policy in education, *i.e.* the policy of teaching religion in water-tight compartments, whatever its ecclesiastical advantage may be, is a policy essentially uncivic. It tends to accentuate and perpetuate the religious differences existing among citizens. But the interest of the State is to minimise these differences. It is so to subordinate them that the citizens may learn, and may learn in childhood, to rub shoulders with persons who do not agree with them, to associate on friendly terms with their opponents in religion, and to think more about points of religious agreement than about other points of religious dissension. It is impossible, I think, to watch

the effect of education in a Catholic atmosphere, as it is called, upon Roman Catholics generally without feeling that they lose something of civic usefulness and influence by being isolated educationally and ecclesiastically from the mass of their fellow-citizens. From the standpoint of the State, then, it is well that children whose parents differ in religion should, as far as possible, be educated together.

4. If a parent is always to decide as to the religious instruction of his child, he must himself show some care for religion. But the parents who are careless in the matter of religion are they whose children are the most likely to prove the hooligans of the present and the criminals of the future, if they receive no religious education. Yet is it not possible that, if an ungodly or profligate parent is required to state what religious teaching or whether any religious teaching should be given to his children, he may decide to keep them away from religious lessons; he may declare that he does not wish them to imbibe any religious teaching at all? It is my belief that the great majority of parents in the slums of large cities will gladly allow their children to receive religious teaching if it is prescribed for them, even though a conscience-clause may afford them an opportunity of withdrawing their children from it; but

I am by no means equally sure that they would all choose religious teaching for their children, if the choice of giving or not giving it to their children were deliberately put to them.

5. Elementary schools are not the only schools in the land. Perhaps they may even derive a lesson from other schools. For if once the State recognises the principle that no child is to receive any religious teaching unless it be exactly in accordance with his or her parents' own creed, what is to become of the public schools, where the possibility of religious teaching, with all its happy and sacred associations, rests upon the willingness of parents generally to accept such religious teaching as is strictly Christian, yet as far as possible free from sectarian bias? It is only too probable that you cannot order religious education upon strictly denominational lines without losing much of high spiritual value in the national life.

I suggest these difficulties; I ask for a thoughtful study of them; I do not say they are insuperable. It is my object to urge that the advocates of denominational religious teaching, however strongly they may prefer denominationalism, should not treat the possibility of undenominational teaching in elementary schools as something to be hated and resisted at all costs.

The attitude of a Churchman who would rather have no religious teaching than have something less than the religious teaching which satisfies his own conscience is, in my judgment, hopelessly wrong. The spirit which demands everything or nothing is only too likely to end in nothing. If it were possible to gain no more at the public expense than a simple elementary denominational Christian teaching, with liberty afforded to all denominations of supplementing it at their own expense, that is at least a possible educational system. It is infinitely preferable to secularism.

Brethren, the Church of England is a national Church. She cannot remain the Church of the nation unless she looks to the interests of the nation as a whole. If she considers only what is best for the children of Churchmen, she becomes immediately a sect. It is when she thinks of the nation as a whole that the nation as a whole will trust and love her. But the supreme educational interest of the whole nation is that all children should be educated as Christians. The sum, then, of my argument is this: Let us fight, as for dear life, for religious education. Let us aim at getting as full a religious education as is possible with the sanction of the State, for the State alone can exercise compelling power over the citizens. But if we

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can get no more than a simple elementary undenominational Christian teaching for all children whose parents do not decisively withdraw them from it, let us not refuse—nay, let us thankfully accept—it.

The one thing needful is that the children of the nation should be brought to the Saviour's feet, that they should look up into His face and hear His words, and that He should take them in His arms and lay His hands on them and bless them. Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

VII

THE SENSE OF OBLIGATION

“How much owest thou unto my lord?”—LUKE xvi. 5.

THIS is a question which occurs, as is well known, in the parable of the unjust steward.

It is, I think, possible that the parable may have caused some little moral difficulty to some scrupulous consciences. It will be well, then, to examine the parable itself, before I try to educe from it the lesson naturally suggested by the words of my text.

The steward of the rich man in the parable is evidently a person of higher importance than an ordinary house-steward. He is more like a bailiff or an agent, or, as he would be called in Scotland, a factor. It appears that he was empowered to deal independently with his master's tenants; he fixed their rents and he could modify them; he received the rents as they fell due, and he paid them, or was supposed to pay them, into his master's account. He was a trusted intermediary; and so it is that, when he is found guilty of culpable extravagance or dishonesty, his

master speaks to him in the language of surprise and even of reproach, "How is it that I hear this of thee?"—of thee, the very last person in the world who should have played me false.

I do not at all wish to represent the steward in the parable as being a better man than he really was. It is not his virtue but his prudence which is the point of the lesson which Our Lord in the parable designs to teach. He looked ahead; he made provision for the future; he saw there was trouble coming, and he took measures to guard against it. It was for this far-sighted intelligence that his master, even in the hour of cashiering him, could award him a certain meed of praise. "The lord commended the unjust steward," or "the steward of unrighteousness"—"because he had done wisely;" "the lord," or "his lord," as it is in the Revised Version, being not, of course, God or Jesus Christ, but the steward's own employer, his master in the parable, and the ground of the praise being simply that the steward had acted like a prudent man with an eye to the future, whether his action was strictly moral or not.

For it is one of the characteristics of Our Lord's teaching that He does not mind drawing His lessons from the lower as well as from the higher aspects of human life. It is, I think, a strange, almost a

startling, characteristic, but it is so. The unjust judge, who yields to the widow's importunity, what he did not yield to the righteousness of her suit, affords an illustration as well as the unjust steward who tries to avert the natural consequences of his dishonourable conduct by a well-timed act of prudence; and the unjust judge is the representative of God Himself. Nay, Our Lord can speak of Himself as appearing at His Advent like "a thief in the night"—so indifferent is He for the time to the moral character of the thief, if He wants to insist upon the necessity of constant vigilance against a sudden unexpected event. However, there is something to be said for the unjust steward, and I wish in all fairness to say it.

Look at those words of his, "What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." That is not very noble language, but at all events it is better than the language of some unemployed men in Manchester, who seem to say: "I am out of work. I have lost my employment, whether through my own fault or otherwise. I am well able to dig; but I would rather not do an honest day's work; there is another course which is much to be preferred—to beg I am not ashamed."

Again, I have sometimes thought that the

steward, guilty as he was—for there can be no doubt that he had wasted his master's goods, even if he had not fraudulently appropriated them—still did not at the last act so badly as many people suppose him to have acted. It is assumed that, when he called up his master's debtors, he tried to curry favour with them, in view of his own approaching disgrace, by releasing them from a considerable part of the debts which were justly owing to his master. But if that had been his conduct, is it likely that his master would have commended him, even for prudence? Would not his master have been tempted to increase the severity of his punishment by something more than mere dismissal from his office? It is possible, I think, to adopt a different view of the steward's conduct in the parable.

Let me take the case of the first tenant whose rent is in arrear, for that case will be typical of all. The unjust steward “said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.” Is it not generally supposed that the debtor owed the one hundred measures of oil, and that the steward, in the hope of winning favour for himself, dishonourably reduced the debt to fifty? It is supposed, in fact, that the steward,

having cheated his master before, now cheated him of fifty measures of oil or of their pecuniary equivalent besides. But I do not think that this is what occurred. Another interpretation of the parable seems to be at once more probable in the circumstances, and more agreeable to the usage of Oriental life.

The debtor, I think, really owed fifty measures of oil. But the steward had for his own purpose put up the debt to a hundred measures. I do not like to speak of him as taking a commission of 100 per cent.—the percentage is so high, at least according to Western ideas, although not, I am afraid, at all incredible in the East; but he has resorted to the process of “squeezing,” like a compradore in China, and the unhappy debtor has been forced to pay just twice the amount of his debt. Half of this exorbitant payment would reach the landlord; the other half would stick in the fingers of the steward or agent.

But now the steward is in disgrace; he “may be no longer steward.” Circumstances are changed. It will be no gain to him to extort double payment, but it will be a gain to win the favour of the tenants. So he sends for them one after another; he reduces their indebtedness to its true amount—all that his master would in any case have received—and he sends them away, it

may be supposed, in a state of high delight and with grateful good-feelings towards himself.

This being so, it becomes possible, I think, to understand the action of the master upon discovering what the steward had done. The master does not censure him, as he must have censured him if he had been found guilty of a fresh swindling trick; for he has acted rightly; he has told the debtors one and all to pay the sums which were actually due from them. But he does not praise him as having acted rightly, for his action has been done not from a high and honourable motive, but out of self-interest. The steward is not apparently penitent for his past misconduct; only he gives up the idea of committing any further fraud, because it is no longer his interest to act fraudulently—rather it is his interest to act honestly. The one characteristic, then, which the master signals out for appreciation in the steward is his shrewdness, his foresight, his prudence. “The lord,” *i.e.* the master, “commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely”—not rightly, or honourably, but prudently.

That is the feature of his conduct, the one feature, which Jesus Christ holds up to the admiration and imitation of Christians. He says, in effect, “Why will not My disciples learn from men of the world the everyday lesson of common sense; why

will they not follow the same business-like principle in the spiritual life as in commercial life ; why should it be true now, and is it to be true for ever, that “the children of this world are in”—or, “as regards”—“their generation wiser than the children of light” ?

Brethren, I sometimes think if there is any charge which the Almighty might well urge against His children upon earth, it is that they so often act as fools. The foolishness of men is more surprising than their wickedness. They make mistakes over and over again ; they make them knowing them to be mistakes, and knowing how grave will be the consequence of making them. God has given them eyes, and they will not see ; He has given them minds, and they will not reflect upon the future ; by their own improvidence they bring upon themselves untold suffering, and then they complain that the suffering is the cruel act of His providence.

But nobody is entitled to live as a fool and then to pose as a victim.

God says to every man : “ You have only one earthly life to live. If you waste the golden days of youth, if you dissipate them in indolence or frivolity, they will never come back to you ; and all that you might have been and ought to have been, you will never be.” Yet how pitiful is the

thousand times repeated tale of misspent years and squandered opportunities, and hopes as disappointing as the bitter apples of the Dead Sea!

Again God says, "Remember, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Sow the seed of intemperance and immorality, and you will some day reap the harvest of sickness, disease, and early death." Why in the world, then, should a man expect to sow his wild oats, as the proverb says, and yet to reap good ears of corn, or to sow the wind and not to reap the whirlwind, or to live in defiance of God's laws when he is young and yet to enjoy the Divine blessing in his old age?

Do not think I would seek to limit by any word of mine the infinite love of God. Never would I seek to shut the door of the Divine mercy against any penitent human soul. The dying thief upon the cross was not cut off from the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. Yet it has been well remarked that Holy Scripture affords one instance of such death-bed repentance, lest any man should despair, but affords one instance only, lest any should presume. For the most part the solemn rule of the Apostle holds good: "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

"The children of this world," "the children of

light"—how strange and sad is the contrast which the Lord in the parable points between them! It is as though He said: "Look at yon man of business; his heart is set upon making a fortune; see how careful he is, how sedulous, how thrifty; he rises so early, he goes to bed so late, he eats the bread of carefulness; many a time all through the day he sits at his desk, he is the creature of industrious habit, he denies himself, it may be for many years, every needless pleasure, indulgence, or extravagance; and he gains his reward. He began life as a clerk at £1 a week, and he ends it as head of a great commercial house. But now look at the man who aspires to win heaven—how easily he takes things, how little trouble he gives himself about them! The time that he spends in prayer, in the study of God's word, in public worship—what a poor fraction it is of all his life! He seems to think it is possible to saunter into heaven. But why should it be reasonable to assume that the pearl of great price is the only treasure which can be had for the mere asking, without the necessity of working for it"?

Our Lord speaks especially of riches. Among all His words in the gospel none perhaps are more intuitively wise than the words which He used about riches. You and I may have known in life a man who has come suddenly and unexpectedly

into the possession of large wealth ; he was reverent and religious perhaps before, but it is only too likely—I am far from saying it is certain—that the increase of wealth has wrought in him a diminution of spirituality.

Riches are not wrong, but they are spiritually perilous. Our Lord says in the parable, Use them well, not foolishly or selfishly, but so as to make friends by your wise generosity—friends among the poor, the hungry, the necessitous, the suffering, “that when ye fail,” *i.e.* when ye die, “they may receive you into the everlasting habitations.”

This is the law of the future life ; but it is the law of the present life as well. Modern society is characterised by the sharp distinction between the rich and the poor. But there is no dislike of riches nobly earned and nobly spent. It is the selfish luxury of the few millionaires, who spend their wealth upon their own frivolous and, it may be, vicious pleasures, and make no contribution except under necessity to the State—which alone ensures them in the peaceful enjoyment of their wealth—it is this which gives poverty such a sting. These are the men who are the only true Socialists, the only men who excite in the people the passionate desire for some other social system than that under which so mean a sense of civic duty is possible.

For we are all stewards of God's gifts—not the clergy alone, but the laity too, in their own calling. What have we done with those gifts? what use have we made of them? "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Have we been faithful? Have we been true to the trust reposed in us? At the awful day when we shall give an account of our stewardship, what plea shall we be able to advance?

I cannot read the parable of the unjust steward without feeling that underlying it all is the three-fold relation which characterises the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is the great Master, the Lord of All, who will one day summon all His servants to render their account. There are the stewards, whoever they may be, the ministers of the great Master, the intermediaries between Him and His tenants at will; it is expressly stated that the parable was addressed to the disciples. There are the tenants themselves, whose life is so uncertain, so precarious; and they are all indebted in a larger or less degree to the same great Master.

To them all comes the question of my text—a question which I would earnestly commend to every member of the congregation to-night—"How much owest thou unto my Lord?"

No man may answer that question in another's

name. It is best that every one should answer it for himself or for herself in the sanctuary of his or her own heart. But I recall how a good man, whom it was my privilege to know when I was a boy, wrote once in his diary, "If we were asked, How much owest thou thy Lord? we must answer, 'All I am and all I have.'"

We owe Him our life. How marvellous a gift it is—how mysterious! The anatomist, with the appliances of modern science, may explore every bone and nerve and tissue and artery of the human frame, but nowhere can he touch any substance with his scalpel and say, "This is life." What is it that is added when life is born, what is it that is withdrawn when life expires? No man can tell. It is God's gift; "in Him we live and move and have our being." It is just as true of men to-day as when the Psalmist wrote in the distant days of old, "Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created; Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust." It is thanks to God and Him alone that we are alive. Do we not owe, then, our lives to His service?

We owe Him our reason. We look down upon the animals; we call them lower creatures than ourselves. Sometimes it seems to me, as I read the proceedings in the Courts of Law, that after all human beings are not greatly or securely raised

much above the animals. But we are their masters. God has given us the intellectual faculty, and with it the progressive capacity, which raises us above the animal world. Is it not a dreadful thought that men should make an evil use of the reason which is man's supreme prerogative—a dreadful thought that they should turn the gift itself against the Giver?

Let us consecrate our intellect to a high and holy end—to the service of man and the worship of God. Let us abhor every profane, unhallowed thought. Let us purify and sanctify our minds. "Let the words of our lips and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer."

We owe Him our love—the love which we bear to others, the love which they bear to us.

Blessed be His name, we are not alone in the world. There are parents who watch over us, there are children who look up to us, there are friends who surround and support us. May I entreat the youthful members of the congregation, young men and young women alike, to choose good friends? Your friends will lift you up or will drag you down. True friendship is grounded in the sympathetic regard for high and holy things. The Divine Master of us all could say to His disciples, "I have called you friends." But the friendship, the

loyalty, the devotion which elevates and consecrates our lives—it is all the gift of God.

Lastly, we owe Him our salvation.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Nothing can take from us that sublime prerogative of spiritual communion with Him. Yet we are unworthy in ourselves, impotent, and sin-stained. We have done evil again and again. As we sit in this cathedral to-night our hearts condemn us. We might have been, we ought to have been, so much better than we are. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

Then God offers us the salvation which is in Jesus Christ. What we cannot do for ourselves He promises to do for us, to do it at once and to do it for ever. We are, as it were, manacled, we cannot emancipate ourselves; and a higher power than ourselves strikes the chains from off our souls.

Like the sunlight, like the rain, like the air we breathe, like the food we eat, salvation is the free gift of God. We can but accept it with grateful hearts. There is no nobler attribute of human nature than gratitude—gratitude to man, and, still more, gratitude to God.

“How much owest thou unto my Lord?”

Everything.

What canst thou pay?

Nothing, alas! nothing. Yet recall the story of the debtors in the parable. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

Let us make the gracious boon of God our own to-night. Let us stand before Him clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is our eternal hope, our all-prevailing atonement.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove.
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

VIII

THE MINISTRY OF HOLY ORDERS

“For their sakes I sanctify Myself.”—JOHN xvii. 19.

THERE are many thoughts which must present themselves to a Christian mind in a ceremony so special and so sacred as an ordination, but I shall limit myself wholly or mainly this morning to one.

It is impossible, indeed, to forget that the setting apart, or making, or ordering of deacons and priests by episcopal hands for the ministry of the Church is a practice distinctive of Christianity. To quote the language of so high an authority as Ranke, in his “History of the Popes”: “It was the distinguishing feature of Christianity that a peculiar class or profession, consisting of members who entered it of their free choice, consecrated by the laying on of hands, removed from all worldly cares and occupations, devoted themselves to spiritual and godly things.” The historian may, perhaps, seem to put the ideal of the Christian ministry in respect of isolation from the world a little too high; but nobody can look

upon you, my younger brethren, at this solemn epoch of your lives without remembering—what, indeed, all ecclesiastical history attests—that the Church of Jesus Christ has uniformly recognised and required, as in fact she originally created, a certain difference between the clergy and the laity, and has always invested her clergy through a unique rite with a unique responsibility.

Nor, again, is it possible to forget that the Church of England, as holding fast the great principle of continuity, rightly insists upon the historical function of the Episcopate in the ordination of her clergy. For me at least there is a difficulty in understanding how a candid student of ecclesiastical history can doubt that the clergy in the primitive age of the Church received their commission through the Apostles, and afterwards, when the Apostolate ceased, through the highest order of the threefold ministry. You and I at least can conscientiously endorse the statement which is placed at the head of the Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer : “It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ’s Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.”

But before the Bishop lays his hands upon you, suffer me to remind you that, as is your privilege,

so, too, is your responsibility ; as you are called to the most sacred office among men, so must you set yourselves with unfaltering purpose to elevate and consecrate your personal lives. "For their sakes," says the Saviour in the text, "for their sakes I sanctify Myself."

He is speaking of His disciples in the closing scene of His earthly life, just before He "went forth" with them, and passed "over the brook Cedron," and "entered" with them into the "garden" of Gethsemane. The hour of parting has come, and He bids them farewell. "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are."

What is the thought which permeates His final words ? It is the thought of sanctification. "He was Himself holy, consecrated, sanctified ; it is He whom, in His own language, "the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world." When I read and re-read the story of the Gospels, when I ask myself what is the supreme quality of the Divine life portrayed in them, and why I feel sure that the mission of the Church in the world can never fail, the answer lies in the immaculate sanctity of Jesus Christ. The world has seen nothing like it before His incarnation or since ; it sepa-

rates Him by an absolute gulf from all other teachers of religion, from Socrates, or Mohammed, or Sakya Mouni. Think for a moment of His relation to the sensual passions which have wrought such dreadful havoc in the field of human life. How well we know—how bitterly and painfully, even the highest of us—the awful inconsistency of their assault! How many a time they sully, if they do not utterly defile, our white baptismal robes! But in His life there is no visible conflict with evil. The sin that we know so well cannot defile Him, cannot approach Him; it shrinks abashed, as it were, from His presence. He lived as a man in the world without even a passing shadow on His life, nor could any faintest breath of wrongful imagining fleck for a moment the pellucid mirror of His soul. Alone among the children of men He could say of His relation to His heavenly Father, “I do always those things that please Him.”

Such was His holiness, His prerogative of sanctity, yet even this He would not claim or use for Himself; it was His, that He might in a measure transmit it as a sacred influence to others, even to those disciples whom He had trained to be the evangelists of the world. “For their sakes,” He says, “I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.”

All Christian ministry is a reflection of the one perfect Divine ministry which once illuminated the world. He, who then came upon the earth, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," was—and described Himself as being—"the Truth." He came to bear witness to the truth; every one that was of the truth heard His voice. Between the absolute truth impersonate in Jesus Christ and all individual truthful souls there was, and is, a communion of spiritual sympathy. But the paramount credential of His truth was His sanctity. To the Christian conscience many things may seem possible, but one is impossible—it is impossible that Jesus Christ should lie. All that He says about Himself is, and must be, true.

You and I have been called to a ministry not unlike His. In our ears, as in the Apostles' of old time, echoes the sacred declaration, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." We are witnesses and commissioners of the truth. No wrong which can be done to the Christian ministry is so grievous as to pretend that it is indifferent to truth; it is for the truth that we are ordained, to the truth we consecrate our lives, and if we were not entirely convinced of the truth which we proclaim, we would abandon our preaching to-morrow. But the seal of Divine truth is personal holiness. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels

of the Lord." It is a lesson ever old and ever new; there is no sermon that a clergyman preaches like his example. If we would sanctify others by our ministry, still more must we sanctify ourselves.

You are receiving sacred orders at a time when the Church of England, if I mistake not, stands upon her trial. Never, I think, was her opportunity more august, never was the danger of her failing to grasp it more serious. She is the Church of the nation, but the Church of the nation must be national. She must be parted from all mere sects or denominations by the loftiness of her ideal and by the amplitude of her sympathy. To narrow the scope of her interests, to concentrate her thoughts upon a part of the people, even though that part be composed of her own sons and daughters, and to treat with indifference or with scorn all that lie outside her pale—is to degrade her from being a national into a sectarian institution. There is too much tendency in some quarters to assume that the complete duty of the Church lies in enunciating certain doctrines, and in inculcating certain laws, at all costs, and in treating the citizens, and the Christians who do not altogether accept those doctrines or conform to those laws, as aliens and outcasts. But the Church can penetrate and sanctify the life of the

nation only by being sympathetic with the national life. As in private life it is not to an enemy or a stranger, but to a friend, that men resort for help and counsel, so the influence of the Church upon the nation will be determined by the esteem and affection in which the nation holds the Church. Whether ecclesiastical establishment be in itself good or bad, there can in the end be no national Church which is distrusted and disliked by half the nation. You will render the best service, then, not only politically but—what is far more important—spiritually to the Church whose ministers you will be by enlisting yourselves from the day of your ordination in that one and only true Church Defence Society which aims at making the Church so deeply loved and so fully trusted by the nation at large, that it would seem a sacrilege to lay a desecrating hand upon her sanctuaries, or even upon her endowments. But of all the assets which the Church may claim as her own in support of her title to national favour the most valuable will be the consecration of her clergy.

Forgive me, then, if I plead with you this morning, in the solemn hour of your ordination, for a high and holy ideal of the clerical life.

A clergyman, in the very nature of his office, is one who should aspire to raise his life above the level of ordinary men. He is set apart by a special act

of consecration. He accepts—nay, he voluntarily seeks—orders which are called holy ; he professes that he is moved to seek them by the Spirit of God. He takes upon himself the solemn responsibility of teaching his fellow-men from year to year and from week to week what lives they ought to live. The very dress he wears should remind him that he more than other men needs clean hands and a pure heart, nor should he ever, I think, so far put off that dress as in appearance to discard or disown his clerical character. The very title of “reverend” which men give him, however conventionally, in addressing him should stamp upon his heart the conviction that to be reverend is properly to be worthy of reverence. For my own part, I cannot listen with satisfaction when the world speaks of a clergyman in such terms of disparaging eulogy as are not perhaps unsuitable to some of the laity. It is no wish of mine that the clergy should be dull or foolish or incompetent ; I hope they will be good, sensible men of business, and will play a successful part in the common interests of life. I hope still more that not as men only but as clergymen they will evince what the world particularly needs in the present day—the union of sanctity and sanity in thought and action. But it is something of a shock to me to hear at any time that a minister of

Christ, charged with the office of winning souls for his Divine Master, should be popularly known as a good dancer or billiard-player or card-player, or a sharp practitioner not above perpetrating a job in his own behalf, or a diner-out, or a connoisseur of wine, or a satellite of wealthy and fashionable houses. I would earnestly and affectionately bid you on this high day of your lives, before the altar of God, to resolve upon some definite and permanent self-sacrifice. It is a thought which will sometimes occur that the Church of England in her Ordinal does not ask enough of the men whom she sets apart for the sacred ministry. The Church of Rome, with all her faults, yet does impose upon her clergy the sovereign duty of living a more self-sacrificing life than ordinary lay Christians are expected to live. It is indeed, as I hold, a grave error which that Church makes in fighting against human nature by demanding one uniform invariable act of self-restraint from all her candidates for Holy Orders ; and she pays the penalty which all societies and institutions must pay if they fight against nature. But the principle of self-denial among the clergy holds good. Believe me, your spiritual influence upon your people will be proportionate to the discipline which you lay upon yourselves. It is wholly futile that you should try to impose a

strict law upon others, unless you impose a law still stricter upon yourselves.

I do not venture to say what your special personal self-discipline should be. It may be celibacy, or total abstinence from alcoholic drinks, or the spending of a large part of your income in charity, or the voluntary acceptance of some arduous duty, or it may be something different from all these things. But let me pray you to beware of associating high profession with low performance. For the world of men will despise what you say, if they cannot respect what you do.

It will be an incalculable help to you in holy orders that you should lift yourselves nearer to heaven for the sake of so lifting your congregation. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," said the Saviour. Try to sanctify yourselves, then, for your people's sake; do something that it is hard to do, and do it constantly, that you may walk in His footsteps. You can scarcely estimate as yet what a strength you will gain in the cause of temperance if you are a teetotaler, or in the cause of purity if you are a celibate, or in the cause of philanthropy if you are known to be regardless of personal gain.

It should be the office of the clergy to enrich society with some moral element which, but for

them, would be necessarily lacking. Alas! that Christianity should be so sadly dependent in the world upon the lives of professing Christians. To all Christian men and women, and especially to the clergy, belongs the responsibility of advancing or else of retarding the faith of Jesus Christ by the example which they set in their own lives.

Suffer me, then, to fix your thoughts upon two phenomena of the Christian English world to-day:—

The religious newspapers, as they are called, by their narrowness and uncharitableness which too often disfigure their pages, by their evidence of the *odium theologicum*, which has come, alas! to be taken for granted in Christian controversy, when it ought to be felt as a disgrace, have gone far to alienate the sympathy of right-thinking men from the faith and from the Church of Jesus Christ. Think of the acrimony exhibited to-day on the one side or the other in regard to the training of young children in the elements of Christianity. I do not say where the fault lies; it is the fact which concerns me, and I ask, What must the man in the street think, the man whom it is so desirable to draw out of the street into the church; what must he think of such controversy among Christians upon such a matter? Is it not only too likely that he will shrug his shoulders,

and mutter beneath his breath, “A plague on both your houses,” and will hold aloof from church altogether? Once again let me urge upon you the truth that we, the clergy, must try to give the world something which it is in our office, and in ours alone, to give. We must not be altogether like other men, not even like the best of other men; we must, if we can, breathe a higher atmosphere; we must, if we can, live a holier life; we must climb the steep rock of duty until we stand on the confines of the heaven of God. We must be in the world, yet not of it; we must sanctify ourselves for the sake of our brethren in the world, that so we may sanctify them.

You are going forth, brethren, into the parishes of this great diocese. It is sometimes said that the north of England is less attractive to the young clergy than the south. I know not why it should be so, but I do know that it ought not to be so. For nowhere are the problems of social, industrial, moral, and spiritual life more absorbing or more fascinating than in the teeming cities of Lancashire. Nowhere is a fuller response made, not indeed to priestly claims unsupported by personal qualities, but to good, hard, sensible, devoted spiritual work.

It is my profound desire that you should enter upon your ministry in the spirit which promises

the highest and holiest issue. May I, then, say to you, Keep as clear as you can of politics? You can do the Church no deeper injury than by associating her fortune with the predominance of one political party. The clergy live and labour not to win votes, but to save souls; and if either by political partisanship or by religious fanaticism you alienate from the Church souls for whom the Saviour died, so far you will fall below the ideal of the Christian ministry; you will be no true servant and minister of the national Church.

Once more let me insist that it should be your object to bring into the parish where you minister some good element which, but for your presence, would almost certainly be wanting to it. There will be many bitter strident voices, loud in imputation of ungenerous motives, quick to put a sinister meaning upon actions which, as so often happens, may take their colour from the eyes of him who looks upon them. Let your voice be raised, in the spirit of this holy season, for peace on earth and goodwill among men. There will be much worldliness about you, a lowness or poverty of the moral view, a disbelief in virtue, a suspiciousness of disinterested conduct, a temper of self-seeking, an acquiescence in the generally accepted code of honour. May your life shine as a beacon-light among men! Sanctify yourselves,

so shall you sanctify others. “The virtuous life of a clergyman,” says George Herbert, “is the most powerful eloquence to persuade all that see it to reverence and love it, and at least to desire to live like him.”

Brethren, my last word—the motto, as it were, which I would leave with you for your future ministry—shall be that moving scriptural phrase, “the beauty of holiness.” Not to be holy alone, although that is an arduous and almost an awful task, but by the beauty of a personal life to make a sinful world enamoured of the holiness which is in Jesus Christ and flows from Him; that is the supreme ideal of the Christian ministry.

I do not belittle—rather would I magnify—the office to which you are called. Great will be your vocation; great also, if God will, the grace accorded to you. Let me recall to your mind the picture of a clergyman painted by one of the saintliest of modern prelates, Bishop Ken:—

“Give me the priest whose graces shall possess
Of an ambassador the just address,
A father’s tenderness, a shepherd’s care,
A leader’s courage which the cross can bear,
A ruler’s awe, a watchman’s watchful eye,
A pilot’s skill the helm in storms to ply,
A fisher’s patience and a labourer’s toil,
A guide’s dexterity to disembroil,
A prophet’s inspiration from above,
A teacher’s knowledge, and a Saviour’s love.”

Brethren, the most solemn hour of your lifetime is come. Before the altar of God you will make the supreme profession, before it you will receive the Divine blessing. May the memory of this hour be ever yours! "Let Thy priests," O God, "be clothed with righteousness." In the dark days of your ministry, when you are tempted, perhaps neglected, misunderstood, when you are forced to stand alone, try to be all that you hope and pray to be at this hour in the sanctuary of the Most High. Above all, cling to the eternal Priest and Saviour from whom you shall receive your sacred commission. He will not fail or forsake you; He will endow you with a spiritual fortitude not your own; He will give you of His Divine grace the holiness without which it is impossible to behold His face, and others shall see Him—if only through a glass darkly—in your lives, and you yourselves shall one day "see Him as He is."

IX

THE FIRE OF THE SPIRIT

“Quench not the Spirit.”—1 THESS. v. 19.

IT would not be difficult to imagine some member of the congregation saying or thinking as he hears these words, What is it that St. Paul means? What is the sin or the error against which he so solemnly warns the Thessalonian Christians?

We know what it is to tell a lie, or to commit a theft, or even to perform some act of folly and then to suffer for it; these are incidents lamentable indeed, but not unintelligible in human experience. But we may well ask ourselves, not without some hesitation, Have I ever “quenched the Spirit,” and when and how did I quench Him, and what has been the result of my quenching?

The question is troublesome; it is hard to answer; and the trouble becomes aggravated when we recall the mysteriously solemn and awful phrase in which Our Lord seems to depict a possible state of controversy between human beings and the Divine Spirit. “I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven

unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men." Again we ask, What is the blasphemy against the Spirit ? Who is the person that is guilty of it, and what is the punishment of his guilt ?

I will try presently to suggest what it was that Our Lord meant by the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. But for a moment look once more at the text.

"Quench not the Spirit." What is it that you and I generally try to quench, or, as the Greek word may be translated, to extinguish ? You say at once it is fire. Is there, then, any connexion between the Holy Spirit and fire ? Just reflect. To-day is Whitsunday. If you were in church this morning at the Holy Communion, you must have heard the following passage read as part of the Epistle : "When the day of Pentecost," *i.e.* Whitsunday as it is now called, "was fully come," the Apostles "were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it," *i.e.* the fire, "sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," or Holy Spirit, "and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here, then,

in the Epistle of to-day is the Spirit; here, too, is the fire; the Spirit and the fire are most intimately connected. Remember, too, how John the Baptist said of the One mightier than himself Who should come after him, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," or Holy Spirit, "and with fire."

In the light of these passages it is possible, I think, to interpret my text as follows: The Holy Spirit is as fire; He descends upon human nature; He glows in human hearts; do not quench, do not extinguish the fire of the Spirit; rather fan it into such a flame that it may penetrate and illuminate all your lives.

"Quench not the Spirit."

It is the solemn responsibility of man that he can either fan or quench, as he will, the Spirit of God.

Let me show you how the Spirit may be said to burn in individual hearts. There is a well-known story which the great American preacher, Theodore Parker, relates in his "Autobiography." "When a little boy in petticoats, in my fourth year, one fine day in spring my father led me by the hand to a distant farm, but soon sent me home alone. On the way I had to pass a little 'pond-hole,' then spreading its waters wide. A rhodora in full bloom—a rare plant in my

neighbourhood, and which grew only in that locality—attracted my attention and drew me to the spot. I saw a little spotted tortoise sunning himself in the shallow water at the root of the flaming shrub. I lifted the stick I had in my hand to strike the harmless reptile; for, though I had never killed any creature, yet I had seen other boys out of sport destroy birds, squirrels, and the like, and I felt a disposition to follow their wicked example. But all at once something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said clear and loud, ‘It is wrong.’ I held my uplifted stick in wonder at the new emotion—the consciousness of an involuntary but inward check upon my actions—till the tortoise and the rhodora both vanished from my sight. I hastened home, told the tale to my mother, and asked what it was that told me it was wrong. She wiped a tear from her eye with her apron, and, taking me in her arms, said: ‘Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear, or disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you all in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends upon your heeding this little voice.’”

It is not likely perhaps that any one who is sitting in this cathedral church has heard or will hear a voice as clear as that. Yet forgive me if I say, Think for a moment; was there never a time in your life, at your confirmation it may be, when a voice within you seemed to say, nay, for all I can tell, it may be saying now: "Do not go on doing that thing which is wrong. You need not do it; you ought not to do it; you are capable of a higher, holier life"?

You have heard that voice, I think; have you listened to it or have you stifled it? You have seen the heavenly vision; have you or have you not been disobedient to it? You have felt the fire within you, the fire of the Spirit of God; have you quickened it into a flame, or have you extinguished it by pouring cold water upon it? I cannot tell—God knows, I wish I could tell—what His Holy Spirit is saying to you now. Is it, Be honest, or Be temperate, or Be kind, or Be pure? Whatever it is, "Quench not the Spirit"; quench not His fire in yourselves. If there is some noble motive of goodness flickering within you, cherish it, fan it into a shining, purifying flame. Quench not the fire of the Spirit in yourselves; even more earnestly would I say, Quench it not in others. If you can think of a friend or a comrade who is trying to make a

fresh start in life, trying—oh ! so patiently and painfully—to retrieve a lost character and to enter once more upon a course of honourable conduct, God forbid you should scoff at him or call him by some cruel name or cast a stone at him—or at her—in the sacred hour of penitence.

“Quench not the Spirit.”

You know now what is the significance of the text in regard to the personal life ; you can apply it for yourselves. On this festival of the Holy Spirit I pray with all my heart that you and I may go out from this sanctuary of God with the strong and high resolve of lifting our own lives, and, so far as we may, the lives of others, to the unsullied pinnacles of righteousness.

But the fire of the Spirit burns in societies as well as individuals ; yet there, too, the fire may be fanned or it may be quenched. Upon the pages of Christian history are inscribed as in letters of gold the high resolves which men and women, acting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have solemnly formed and deliberately executed for the amelioration of the world. Let me enumerate some of these resolves :—

Human life is sacred, and it is an offence against God’s law to destroy the lives of innocent new-born children.

Or, again, No man is entitled or permitted to hold the person of his fellow-man in slavery.

Or, Womanhood may not and shall not be oppressed by the tyranny of man ; it claims from every man respect, honour, and chivalry.

Or, Man is responsible for his religious creed to God alone. Liberty of conscience and of worship is his inalienable right.

Or, The weak members of society, the young, the suffering, the necessitous, the afflicted, are always and everywhere proper subjects of sympathetic self-sacrificing treatment.

Or, The prison-houses of a Christian country may not be left as fountains of contaminating vice ; they must be cleansed by wholesome moral and spiritual influences.

Or—if I may come to such resolves as are glowing in men's hearts to-day—

A man is responsible not only to God but to his country for the sources of his income.

A man may not enrich himself by spreading poverty and misery, directly or indirectly, among the working-class of his fellow-citizens.

A rich man is not entitled to hoard his wealth or to spend it on himself or his family alone ; he owes the security of his wealth to the State, and to the State he must make some return for it.

Or, lastly, It is the duty of society to shield its weak, inexperienced members against temptation, at this time especially against the solicitations to impurity of life through the diffusion of immoral literature, and, above all, through the shameful processes of the White Slave Trade.

Whenever one of these resolves begins to glow in human hearts, there are always people who cry : "It is ridiculous, it is impossible ; what has been will be, what has been must be. It is no good to aim at changing human nature." These are the people who "quench the Spirit" of the living God ; may He grant that you and I may not be as they are ! But the climax of sin is reached when a man deliberately calls good evil and evil good, when he not only sets himself against the saving of human souls, but imputes some sinister motive or design to him who would save them. Was not this the sin which stamped the enemies of Jesus Christ ? They saw His works of charity, they saw Him heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, and cleanse the stricken lepers, and they said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." That is "the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" ; I said I would tell you what it was—to pretend that the Author of love and life is in league with the prince of evil.

There is yet a third atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit burns as a fire, and in which He may be fanned or quenched by the operation of human lives. I speak of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

A hundred years ago the Spirit began to kindle in earnest and pious Christians the burning desire of evangelising the many races of the heathen. How the men of the world scoffed at missionaries like Carey and Morrison ! How bitter they were ! How wrong they have proved to be ! How foolish they look now ! It did not occur to them that they were trying to "quench the Spirit" of God ; but the Spirit was stronger than they. The countries in which it would be madness, as they declared, to preach Christianity—such as China, India, and Japan—are all open to the missionaries of the Cross to-day ; and it is more than probable that thoughtful observers in the East and in the West are coming to acknowledge that the best hope for the welfare of the Empire and the world, the only sure means of ultimately uniting in sympathetic bonds the people of the East and of the West, lies in the religion of the one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

What is the Holy Spirit doing now ? Where does His fire burn ? Where does His light shine ? Are we "quenching the Spirit"—you and I ?

There is a movement for drawing the forces of Christendom—too long sundered and too often opposed—nearer together. It is the policy of Christian Reunion. It is authoritatively commended to the interest and intercession of the Church on this Sunday. It cannot but be dear to the heart of Him who prayed for His disciples that they might be one even as He and His Father in heaven were one.

I know only too well the difficulties besetting that movement. They are, perhaps, as much difficulties of personality as of principle. But it is necessary to proceed with cautious steps. Hesitation may be wiser than precipitancy. But are we making no effort to advance the sacred cause of Reunion? Do we fold our hands and shrug our shoulders and look askance at our Christian brethren who are not of our Church? Do we say, "Churchmen are Churchmen, and Nonconformists are Nonconformists; it is idle to dream of creating a friendly relation between them." Then it may be, brethren, we are "quenching the Spirit," we are extinguishing the flame of Christian charity. But if we will set ourselves patiently and sympathetically to understand the position of our brethren, as we would that they in their turn should understand ours, then the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love who inspires the

thought of Christian Reunion, will in His own time fan it into a bright and sacred flame.

“Quench not the Spirit.”

He is the Spirit of love ; He is also the Spirit of truth. Even now, if I mistake not, He is kindling the desire for a restatement of Christian truth in the formularies of the Church—not for new truth, but for a revision of the mode in which the truth has for so long a time been expressed. Two centuries and a half have elapsed since the last revision of the Prayer Book in 1661. Think how life in England has been changed since then ; think what our feelings would be if we were told that our lives, our habits, our meals, our comforts, our means of information and locomotion, must be precisely those of the middle of the seventeenth century, no more and no better. It is just as unreasonable to suppose that the religious formularies of two centuries and a half ago can prove adequate to the spiritual faith and feeling of to-day. You may keep the old bottles if you will, but soon or late the new wine will burst them. “New wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.” What does it mean—this demand that there shall be no change, even of a comma, in the Prayer Book of 1661 ? Is it not in effect a quenching—nay, a denial—of the Holy Spirit ? For who is entitled to say that the fire of the

Spirit burned in the Churchmen of the seventeenth or the sixteenth century, and that it does not burn in us now?

I plead for caution, but still more I plead for candour. We cannot live for ever under the dead hand of the past. If the Church of England has silenced the voice of the Holy Spirit within her, if she admits her impotence to receive an inspiration from heaven, then not to her will belong in the coming years the spiritual sovereignty of the nation or the world. For it is the function, the prerogative of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus Christ Himself declared it, to guide the Church from age to age, by slow degrees, into the fulness of the Divine truth.

Brethren, if there is any article of revelation in which I believe with all my heart, I believe in the Holy Spirit of God. Do not quench His fire, do not turn a deaf ear to His voice. To-day is Whitsunday. It is the festival of the Holy Spirit. Let us think of Him, let us pray to Him, let us put our trust in Him.

“Spirit of purity and grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see ;
Oh ! make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,
And worthier Thee.”

X

SPIRITUAL ELECTION

“ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”—2 PET. i. 10.

WE are in the throes of a general political election. But it is not of the political election that I wish to speak ; rather on this crucial day, in the course of a political election which is fraught, as everybody feels, with issues of great and lasting moment to the country and Empire, I will, if you will let me, turn your thoughts to that other very different election which the Apostle exhorts his fellow-Christians who “ had obtained like precious faith ” with himself “ through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ” to “ make sure.”

A general political election, indeed, is not an unmixed blessing to society. I know not what you think of the turbid and frothy matter which has filled the columns of the newspapers during the last few weeks. It cannot have done any good ; let us pray that it may not have done much harm. But if either of the political parties in the democracy seriously believed, or seriously expected anybody

to believe, what it says about the other, it would be difficult to retain belief in democratical government at all. At such a time a Christian Churchman may perhaps recall some words of an ancient and venerable document, never more deeply needed among all classes of the people than it is to-day : “ What is thy duty towards thy neighbour ? My duty towards my neighbour is to hurt nobody by word nor deed, to be true and just in all my dealing, to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart, to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering.”

At such a time the question is naturally raised, What should be the attitude of the clergy and of ministers of religion generally towards politics ? To demand that they should take no part in a political election would be to put upon them an intolerable strain ; they are men with the natural instincts and aspirations of humanity ; they are electors, bound to exercise the franchise entrusted to them for the good of their country ; they are citizens of the greatest Empire under heaven. It is only right that they should discharge their civic responsibility like other electors by the votes which they give at the polls. But it is on all accounts desirable that the House of God should be kept free from political controversy. Here, at least, within these hallowed walls, whatever tumult of strident

voices may rage outside, it should be possible to breathe an atmosphere of peace and sanctity and communion with the Father of Spirits.

For the clergy owe a duty to all souls ; they can make no spiritual distinction between one political party and another ; it is the object of their ministry to elevate and consecrate all parties. There can be no greater mistake than to associate the fortune of the Church with one political party. It cannot be well, therefore, that the organisation of a diocese should be used for political ends. Churchmen are or may be united in spiritual action ; but they are not at one in politics ; and to estrange any section of Churchmen from the work of the Church is to lower the spiritual activity of the Church herself. The function of the clergy is not to win votes but to save souls ; and if only they will bear in mind that he who drives away from the offices of the Church any one human soul for whom the Saviour died falls below the true ideal of the Christian ministry, there will be small peril of the clergy overstepping the line which separates religion from politics.

But the stress of the excitement attending upon a political election will soon be over. We who assemble here from Sunday to Sunday for the worship of Almighty God do not rank ourselves by any corporate utterance or activity on one side

or the other in the battle of parties. Perhaps the thought most forcibly stamped upon our minds is that the country will be safe, whatever Government may be in power, safe at least against the gravest of social evils, if the statesmen who hold the reins of office and the citizens everywhere are actuated by a sense of responsibility to the eternal Judge ; and that nothing can save the country if it loses the simple, steadfast, and inestimable virtues of the Christian faith and character.

Yet the political campaign has exhibited one special feature which naturally connects itself with the text of my present sermon. Whatever may be thought of the candidates for parliamentary honours, at least they have “given diligence to make their calling and election sure.” You will admit that they have not proved deficient in energy and enterprise. They have held innumerable meetings; they have delivered endless speeches, they have said all that it is possible to say, and have said it many times over ; they have, I am afraid, said a good deal which it would have been better not to say. They have practised the humiliating and unnecessary art of canvassing—humiliating because it is a fertile source of inveracity, and unnecessary because, if a man is fit to give a vote at all, he is fit to give it and ought to give it without being worried out of his life by

the solicitations of rival partisans. Nay, they have tried, in accordance with the strange law of modern democracy, to assure success by declaring to all the world with equal emphasis on both sides that success was already assured.

All this has been a serious temporary disturbance of social life. But it is no wish of mine in this or any other sermon to applaud or to censure the electioneering tactics (so far at least as they are honourable) of any party or of any person. It is of another calling, of another election that I speak to-night; and I say that, if it is worth while to take so much trouble for a political election, there is yet higher reason to take trouble for the spiritual election to which the Apostle refers. "Wherefore then, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" in other words, spare no pains to satisfy yourselves that your calling and your election is safe.

What is that "calling" or "election"?

It is too much the fashion to speak or think of this or that class of people alone, the clergy, for example, or the missionaries, as being called to their special duty in life. No doubt in the Office for the Ordering of Priests the Bishop puts this question to the Ordinands, "Do you think in your heart that you be truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of the

Church of England, to the order and ministry of the priesthood ? ” and each of them answers for himself, “ I think it.” But the teaching of the Church, as of the New Testament, is that every Christian, whatever his profession may be, is called of God. It is worth while to open a Concordance of the New Testament, and to observe there how much is said about the Christian calling, and said in reference not to one class or party of Christians, but to all Christians alike. So, too, in the second Collect for Good Friday we pray “ for all estates of men in God’s holy Church, that every member of the same ” (not the clergy alone, but “ every member of the same ”) “ in his vocation,” *i.e.* in his calling, “ may truly and godly serve Thee.”

Our vocation, then, is not to be clergymen or laymen, but to be Christians. It is Jesus Christ who calls us. He says to us, as it were, “ Follow Me, receive My spirit, live the life which I live, ascend with Me from earth to heaven.” There is an expression which St. Paul uses more than once ; it is translated “ called to be saints,” but it is rather “ saints by calling,” or vocation. To be saints, to be holy as Jesus Christ was holy—that is our calling, our vocation. Do we take trouble enough, brethren, to “ make ” that “ calling sure ”?

That, then, is the calling; what is the election?

The New Testament speaks often of “ the elect.”

The elect are the chosen of God ; they are chosen not by the popular vote, but by His sovereign grace. If they answer to His calling, they become His elect ; it is through them that He acts ; it is to them that He looks for the accomplishment of His will.

I have sometimes thought that God does not work so much through individuals or through masses ; He works through a few choice human souls, if I may say so, through a spiritual aristocracy. How indifferent was Our Lord apparently in His human life to the effect of His Gospel upon the majority of His contemporaries ! He never counted the heads of His converts ; He never tabulated statistics of His ministry ; but He chose a few faithful friends, His disciples and Apostles, He taught and trained them, and through them He began the conversion of the world. He was pre-eminently, as has been said, the *Pastor Pastorum*, the Shepherd of the shepherds of men.

It is so still. As in Elijah's time, so to-day, the world of men seems as if it were given up to thoughtlessness and sinfulness. The saints of God are tempted to suppose that they stand alone ; yet still God tells them that He has left Himself "seven thousand men," His remnant, His elect, "who have not bowed the knee to the image

of Baal." The truth is as it has ever been. "So now at this time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Never did the Church more vitally need than it needs to-day the few strong righteous spirits of the elect. Even ten righteous men may still avail to save their city. If in this city of ours and in this congregation there were but a remnant, as I humbly trust there is, of Christian men and Christian women wholly and devotedly self-consecrated to God and to His cause, the supreme interests of Manchester would be safe. For it is the elect souls who elevate and consecrate the people.

Now, perhaps it is possible to understand why the Apostle says in the text, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." So many persons would like their "calling and election" to be made sure, but they do not think of "giving diligence" to make them sure. St. Paul would argue with such persons: "If it is worth while to spend so much pains over a political election, how much more must it be right to take yet further pains for the sake of winning the heavenly election, which is the supreme, legitimate object of human desires! Men so often act as if they would say, Heaven is worth winning, but it is not worth taking much trouble to win. If Jesus

Christ were here He would say, Heaven is the one thing worth winning, and you must take an infinite amount of trouble if you want to win it."

May I, then, suggest to you two or three ways of "giving diligence to make your calling and election sure"?

There is, first, the study of the Bible. It would be curious to learn how many members of the congregation gathered here to-night have ever read the whole Bible, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. Not infrequently in the old days I used to put to sceptical critics of the Bible the question, "Have you read the whole Bible?" and the answer was strangely disappointing. But you and I are specially bound to "search the scriptures." If there is any striking fact in the personal history of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is His reverence for the sacred literature of His race. The Bible occupies a unique place in the religious literature of the world. Sir William Jones, the great Oriental scholar, wrote of it: "I have carefully and regularly perused the Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that the volume, independently of its Divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence than can be collected from all other books in whatever language they may have been

written." I do not mean that all parts of the Bible are or can be equal in religious value; the Bible is a record of spiritual life; it must therefore advance and ascend; its later parts must be higher than the earlier; but it is only when we have read the whole Bible, and have read it prayerfully, that we can know what the Bible as a whole is, only then that we can choose for the most frequent meditation the passages of deepest influence upon our own spirituality. If you have not read it through, I would beg you to begin it to-night, and to go through it chapter by chapter till you have finished it. At the end of a year you will be a much wiser man or woman.

Then, again, there is the study of the lives of the saints. The saints are the holy men and women who by their lives, and not seldom by their deaths, have illuminated the nineteen Christian centuries; they are the fine flowers of Christianity; they prove the reality and the sanctity of the Christian character; they show how it is possible on earth to live in some degree the life of heaven. Nobody can study the biographies of such Christians as St. Polycarp, St. Ambrose, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Carlo Borromeo, St. Teresa, St. François de Sales, Bishop Andrewes, Bishop Wilson, Dr. Carey, Mr. Martyn, Bishop Patteson, Dr. Livingstone, Sister Dora, Father

Damien (to cite a few names out of many), without being lifted to a higher sense of duty and worship, or without taking more pains to become like them and like the Master whom they adored. Yet how little most of us know of this glorious Christian hagiology !

Again, let me say to you, Cultivate your own spiritual life. What would the body be without physical exercise, or the mind without intellectual discipline ? and can it be the soul alone—the sovereign element in human nature—which needs no care ? Have you thought of the danger of drifting away from God ? We say God is far from us ; but it is we who are far from Him. We cannot see Him, perhaps, or hear Him as of old ; but the fault is ours, not His. There was a traveller mountaineering with a Swiss guide in the Himalayas. They came upon a steep ice-slope. It was difficult to see how progress was possible. They unroped, they parted company, the guide went on ahead, the traveller stood still. Suddenly he became aware that the guide was a long way off. He called to him in vain ; he gesticulated, he shouted at the top of his voice, but it was no good. The distance between them grew wider every minute. Then he perceived that he was moving himself. The part of the ice-slope on which he stood had become detached.

He was drifting helplessly, hopelessly into the abyss. So it is not God who drifts away from us ; it is we who drift away from Him. Will you reflect, brethren, that we always drift downwards ? Nobody ever drifted upwards. If we are careless, we may drift into hell ; we shall certainly not drift into heaven. Let us, then, cultivate our spiritual life. Jesus Christ spent whole nights in prayer to God ; how long do we spend ? Jesus Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." It was His one supreme request. Do we all come, and how often do we come, to the Communion of His Body and His blood ? Do not think that I would blame any one ; only it is clear that we must take pains if we would "make" our "calling and election sure." We cannot disobey the Divine command and yet expect the Divine benediction.

Once more, if we would "make" our "calling and election sure," let us remember the force of habit.

A person may be naturally timid ; but he may school himself into courage, as Havelock did, who so conquered his natural cowardice that it was said in the end he knew not what fear was. Or a person may be naturally mean. It is difficult, I think, to avoid a feeling of great astonishment at the spectacle of some rich men—not of course all—owing the security of their possessions to the

State, and giving little or no money to any public purpose, not even to the support of the hospitals. Believe me, these mean wealthy citizens are the persons who constitute a danger to society in the present day. We need to train ourselves from childhood to manhood or womanhood in the practice of almsgiving ; then we may end by finding that it is indeed “more blessed to give than to receive.” Or, again, a person may not value, as you and I value, the opportunity of public worship ; but he may say to himself, in the spirit of sanctified patriotism, “If I spend my Sundays upon the river or the golf-links, without a thought of God, am I not in effect telling my fellow-countrymen that the love of God or the fear of God is in my eyes an element of no value to the national character and the national life ?”

Above all, let us cling to Jesus Christ. Let us try to be like Him. Let us set our trust upon Him in life and in death. If there is in all human history one central figure, the indisputable head of all humanity, it is He ; there can be none other than He. The world has known many teachers and masters, but only one Saviour ; and still, as ever, the supreme need of humanity is to be saved from its sins.

So shall we “give diligence to make our calling and election sure.” Our election is not political,

but spiritual; we make no canvass, we solicit no votes, we are not elected by other men, we are the elect of Jesus Christ. He calls us, and we respond to His voice. God grant that even in the storm and stress of political controversy we may not be unmindful of that day when "the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven," and the elect shall receive from Him the final benediction of their high calling, and shall "sit down with Him in the Kingdom of His Father."

XI

EXCUSES

“They all with one consent began to make excuse.”

—LUKE xiv. 18.

IT is a favourite thought of mine that many of Our Lord’s sayings are found to derive an enhanced beauty or value from the context in which they occur. If you take a synopsis of the Gospels, *i.e.* if you place in parallel columns the narratives of the same discourse as it is recorded by two or three or all the Evangelists, and if you so learn when and where, and to whom, and in what circumstances He spoke particular words, I think you will generally conclude that the occasion, or the personality of the hearers, or some incident or remark immediately preceding the words, lends a special point or purpose to the lesson which He taught. The word-picture, if I may call it so, is impressive in itself, but it is rendered still more impressive by its setting.

It is so with the parable to which my text belongs. Our Lord had been delineating in bright colours the nature or character of the Christian life. He had portrayed the ministry of Christian

service under the figure of a rich man entertaining, not his rich neighbours, as we so often entertain our friends of the same social standing as our own, but the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. Somebody who listened to Him, one of His fellow-guests at the Pharisee's table, was carried away by a momentary enthusiasm for this self-denying hospitality, or possibly for the recompense awaiting it, according to Our Lord's own prophecy, "at the resurrection of the just." He cried out, with obvious reference to his present circumstances at the Pharisee's table, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

At once Our Lord checks him. Enthusiasm is all very well; but unless it is sober, deliberate, and resolute, it will fail soon or late. Our Lord desires no followers but such as have counted the cost of following Him. So He utters the parable of which my text is a part, as though He would say: "Do not deceive yourself, my friend. It may be a high privilege to 'eat bread in the Kingdom of God,' but you will not find that most people are so eager for the privilege. Rather it appears that they will avail themselves of any and every pretext as a means of escaping the banquet to which the Divine favour calls them."

"They all with one consent began to make excuse."

It is necessary to bear in mind that the supper—or, as we should call it now, the dinner—is a spiritual feast ; it is the supper of the Lord. The behaviour of the invited guests is strange enough as it is, but, unless the supper were a feast of Divine things, it would be unintelligible. For most people are glad of an invitation to a dinner-party ; at least I suppose they are glad, or why do such parties exist ? Your host seeks “the honour of your company,” and you express your “great pleasure” in accepting the invitation to dine with him. Let us charitably suppose that the truth is spoken or written on both sides.

It is plain, I think, that the guests of the parable had not only been invited, but had accepted the invitation. For the host sent his servant to remind them of his dinner-party. It is probable that the invitation had been given verbally ; the guests might have forgotten it. Anyhow, it was in accordance with the usage of the East to remind them. So the message went out, “Come, for all things are now ready.” But the response was disappointing. “They all with one consent began to make excuse.”

If I am right in thinking that the guests had accepted the invitation, then the excuse now offered by each of them [was the breach of an engagement. They had promised to do something,

and they did not do it, because they did not want to do it. They broke their word. ~~May I~~ I pause here to remark that ~~we~~ do not think half enough about the simple Christian duty of keeping engagements? What a world of trouble we often cause by breaking them! Here was the master of the house with his dinner prepared, his oxen and his fatlings killed, and all things now ready, but with no guests. I can well believe he was angry. Most of us, I suspect, would have been angry too.

I do in my heart believe that we ought to be far more scrupulous than we are in the matter of keeping engagements. Our word, when once it is given, should be our bond. Nothing, or scarcely anything, should be allowed to come in the way of our doing what we have undertaken to do. There was a King of England whose lifelong motto was *Pactum Serra*—“Be true to your plighted word.” It is a motto well worth remembering in these days.

But the guests in the parable, being persons of less plain speech than some people in Lancashire, were unwilling to say outright—what would have been the simple truth—that they did not want and did not mean to attend the dinner-party. They made excuses, they pleaded engagements; they acted much in the same way as we act when we write saying that we are exceedingly sorry but

an unforeseen engagement prevents us from enjoying the pleasure to which we had so greatly looked forward of dining with somebody with whom we would rather not dine.

Let us examine their excuses a little. It is possible they will shed some light upon ours.

The first said : “ I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it ; I pray thee have me excused.”

He is evidently (a man who is getting on in the world, he has made some money, he is able to speculate in land. It is his financial success which is the cause of his spiritual failure. How sadly common an experience that is ! I daresay you have known somebody—at least I myself have—who was reverent and devout, a regular Church-goer, a man of high spiritual interests so long as he was not particularly well off. Then he became rich, God prospered him, and he forgot God.) He was externally the same man, with the old, frank, easy manner, with the laughter and humour of old days ; but somehow it seemed as if a cloud springing up had hidden from him the sunshine of the Divine Presence. (Wise and true, with a profound insight into human nature, although so startling, were Our Lord’s sayings about riches.) Not that riches are wrong in themselves ; on the contrary, they are, or ought to be, noble instruments of beneficence ; but

they are perilous, they tend to cloud the soul ; and if there were in this cathedral church to-night any man who is making a fortune, I would respectfully charge him in Christ's name to take heed that his generosity, nay, his spirituality, shall not decline as his worldly wealth increases. For a man who goes out of town for the week-ends to look after his property, as he says, and who hears the church-bells ringing on Sunday morning and never sets foot inside the church, never comes near the holy sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, but spends his Sunday in escorting his house-party over his stables and gardens and the broad acres of the estate which he has lately acquired, is he not just like the man who pleaded in the parable, "I have bought a piece of land and I must needs go and see it ; I pray thee have me excused"? But I do not feel quite sure that God Almighty accepts his excuse.

The second invited guest puts forth a different excuse. It is this : "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them."

Observe that the first defaulting guest, the rich man who had plenty of time on his hands, is so busy that it is absolutely necessary for him to inspect his property on Sunday. "I must needs go and see it."

The man of business is more candid. He does

not beat about the bush. He has bought his oxen, and he says bluntly, "I go to prove them," *i.e.* I am going to see what they are like.

No doubt it is a good thing that a man should look after his own business. I do not believe in seeing through other people's eyes. It is the personal supervision of the master which ensures the industry of the servants.

[The guest in this parable was a first-rate man of business. He had made a purchase. Was it a good one or not? Had he been taken in or had he scored a point? Were the five yoke of oxen as strong and sound and as fit for ploughing as they had been warranted to be? All this is right enough; business is business. It is an absorbing interest, it demands a large sacrifice of time and thought. It is the source of civic prosperity. It is the bond of union among the peoples of the world. For my own part I can never look at the crowd of merchants gathered within the walls or upon the steps of the Royal Exchange, but I realise with an intense conviction the dignity of their calling and the value of the service which they render to the national life.]

But there is always a danger that business may sap the springs of spirituality. For business is essentially self-seeking. It lends itself only too easily to rules and practices widely alien from the

laws of Jesus Christ. "A good name is rather to be chosen than riches" is the motto inscribed upon the dome of the Royal Exchange in Manchester. But there is a worldly, material habit of mind which is sometimes at least the outcome of money-making. When this is so, the man of business loses his taste for the spiritual banquet to which God calls him. He thinks more of his banking-book than of his Bible. He carries the spirit of the week into Sunday. There is always some scheme, some speculation, some balancing of accounts which prevents him from attending Divine Service. It must be done then or it will never be done at all, and so his answer to God's invitation is always the same: "I am very sorry; I wish I were not so deeply engaged, but I must not lose the chance of making a little more money. I cannot come. I pray thee have me excused."

Manchester above most cities of the Empire has been rich in the example of high-minded citizens who have not suffered the pursuit of riches to intervene as a cloud between their souls and God; who have been builders of churches, founders or supporters of religious and philanthropic institutions; who have consecrated the wealth which God has given them to the highest good of humanity. Their motto has not been

this "I cannot come," rather it has been, if I may not irreverently quote the sacred passage, "I come to do Thy will, O God." May such citizens never be lacking in our midst! They are the very salt of our city.

There is yet a third guest in the parable. He is the man who has just entered upon the matrimonial state. Notice how summary is his answer to the invitation; he makes no apology for his absence, he does not so much as ask to be excused; for him it is enough to say bluntly, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," or in other words, "You cannot expect me to go to church during my honeymoon."

I am afraid it happens too often even in the present day that the ties of family life are pleaded as excuses for neglecting some plain duty or for doing something which is undeniably wrong. Have you never heard of a person who used to spend a good deal of money in charity urging, as soon as he gets married, that charity begins at home, and meaning, although he does not explicitly say, that where it begins, there it must end? Have you never heard of a person cheating a railway company by falsifying his children's ages, that he may pay only half a fare instead of the whole fare which is due when he takes his family to the seaside? I read in the newspaper one day that

a rich man had cut down all or nearly all his public subscriptions, as he felt compelled to practise economy for the sake of his descendants in view of the death duties or the Budget; and the next day that the same rich man had rented for shooting one of the most extensive and expensive properties in Scotland.

“I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”

Would it not have been better that the newly-married husband should come, and should bring his wife with him? Marriage creates new claims and new duties; but it ought not, I think, to be urged as an excuse for violating the duty of accepting the invitation to the Divine banquet. It is told of Bishop Selwyn, the first Bishop of New Zealand, that he made his bride give him a promise on the eve of their wedding-day not to stand in the way of his undertaking any duty at home or abroad which might be laid upon him by the Church. There may be wives who for domestic or other reasons have lowered the high ideals of their husbands. There are, I am sure, husbands who have sought to lay the blame of their lowered ideals on their wives; they have urged that it was impossible for them on their wives' account to render services which on their own account they did not wish or mean to render.

“I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”

But if any life upon earth needs the motive of religion, it is the domestic life, with its responsibilities and opportunities, with its intimate ties of affection and obligation, with its mysterious adumbration of the awful and sacred bond between Christ and His Church.]

“They all with one consent began to make excuse.”

How true it is and yet how sad that men and women too are so ready to make excuses for abandoning their highest prerogative! We need religion; we all need it so vitally; we need the grace of God, the services and sacraments of His Church for the high and holy inspirations which lift the soul to heaven. We need them so much, yet we suffer any poor threadbare pretext to tear us away from them.

For the excuses in the parable are no more than types of the various ways in which we all excuse ourselves for not doing what we know to be our duty. Let me warn you against excuses.

“Qui s’excuse, s’accuse,” says the French proverb. It is easy to deceive ourselves by excuses; but we shall not deceive other people. An excuse never tells the whole truth; it generally distorts what truth it does tell. Remember how when

Moses came down from the Mount he saw the people dancing round the golden calf; he took it and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder; he strewed it upon the water and made the children of Israel drink of it; then he turned to Aaron in his wrath, asking him why he had committed the grievous sin of making the calf; and this was Aaron's reply : "Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us. . . . And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

"There came out this calf," indeed ! Why, he had made the calf himself. See how our excuses cast the blame which is wholly our own upon somebody else. We say we should never have done the evil deed, if somebody had not tempted us or enticed or led us astray or brought us into such a position that we could not help doing what we did. Here is Aaron shuffling off the blame—his own blame—upon the people. Have not you and I been disposed now and then to act like him, and do we realise now that his—and ours—was a shabby action ? But the case is worse when a man lays the blame of his own fault upon a woman. For he ought to be the pro-

tector of womanhood, not its accuser. Yet you and I have heard, I think, of an ancient story in which a man says, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." I am sorely afraid that ancient story has repeated itself many and many a time in human experience.

The habit of making excuses is only too common. "They *all* with one consent began to make excuse." It is none the better, nay, it is the worse, for being so common. For it almost invariably betrays some flaw or fault, some act which will not bear inspection in the past history of a life. The ~~only~~ ^{own} sure way of avoiding excuses is so to live as to be in no need of making them. Let us then have "a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man"; let us live a life simple and sincere, bright as a crystal lake; let us eschew subterfuges and prevarications, the half-truths which are always half-lies; let us seek to be true as He was, who could say of Himself not so much "I speak the truth," or even "I do the truth," as "I am the Truth."

XII

A HOLY CITY

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”—REV. xxi. 2.

THE Bible begins with a garden, it ends with a city. The first scene in *Genesis* is the “garden” which “the Lord God planted in Eden,” the last scene in *Revelation* is “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.”

How striking is the contrast! Yet how fully it answers to the secular law of human history! For there is no doubt that primitive man was a denizen of the country; he lived among the woods, the rivers and mountains, in the pure atmosphere and beneath the free expanse of heaven. But civilised man tends with increasing persistency to make his way into the towns. He is too often found immured in the slums and rookeries of great communities, even when the names of the crowded areas in which he dwells seem to parody their actual present condition. What is to be said, for instance, of St. George’s-in-the-Fields in London, or of Angel Meadow in Manchester?

The first word of civilisation then was the garden, its last word will apparently be the city. Philosophers like Bacon and poets like Cowley have sought to exalt the country in comparison with the city. They have seen in one the hand of God and in the other the hand of man. If I may quote a well-known line of Cowper's "Task"—

"God made the country, and man made the town."

In other words, the country is Divine, the city is human.

It may be so, yet, as Mr. Charles Booth has shown in his monumental survey of the life of the people of London, the city exercises an irresistible attraction upon the minds of the young of both sexes ; it is interesting, exciting, absorbing, and in spite of all its drawbacks, it sucks them into its vortex ; they are fascinated by its graceless charm, and when once they have entered it, they seem no more to possess either the power or the will to escape from it.

The Church, then, must gird herself to cope with the serious and instant problems of urban life. The question of the twentieth century is not whether it is possible to keep the mass of the people on the land or to bring them back to the land, but how it is possible to sweeten and soften,

to dignify and sanctify their lives within the area of great cities.

The Church must refuse to acquiesce in the wholly irreligious assumption that a city cannot be made a holy place. She can never allow that, as men come more and more to be dwellers in cities, they must degenerate, not only physically but morally. She must insist upon the duty of providing soon or late such social conditions as will afford every man, woman, or child who is born into the world a reasonable chance of living a decent, honest, and God-fearing life. She must preach in season and out of season the higher patriotism (as I love to call it) which simply forbids citizens to enrich themselves at the cost of spreading disease, misery, and crime in the community to which they owe their wealth. Nor may she ever lose sight of "the holy city, new Jerusalem," which is at once the ideal and the inspiration of civic reformers upon earth.

It is to my mind an axiom of religion that the Church is vitally interested in all the parts of man's composite being. "Godliness," says the Apostle, "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." It is impossible, I hold, that a minister of Jesus Christ should say to any human being: "My care is for your soul. Your body, your mind, your

health, your food, your house, your playground, your school is no concern to me. Come into the church, if you want me. You will find me there." Rather would I say: "All these things concern me intimately, and they concern me because I am a Churchman and a clergyman, and because they affect the welfare and the safety of souls." Believe me, you will not find the truest and tenderest humanity in the men and women who regard the present life alone. It is they who look upon the present life as preparatory to a future life that have ever been the best ministers to human needs. You have stood perhaps under some ordered avenue of stately trees within an ancient park. Why is it all so regular, so beautiful? Because it leads to a noble mansion beyond. Were nobody living in the mansion, the avenue would be a desert. And is not this life, which is the avenue to the Father's house of the many mansions, kept bright and pure by anticipation of the eternity which is its goal?

Let me ask you, then, to consider the true relation of the Church to the physical and moral life of a great city like Manchester.

In the ideal city of the future the physical degeneration which is so lamentable a characteristic of modern urban life will be, not perhaps removed, but sensibly mitigated. It is a sad fact that no

spectacle of English life appeared so striking or so distressing to the delegates who came a few months ago from the Colonies and Dependencies of the Empire to the Imperial Press Conference as the mean, stunted, and haggard aspect of the crowds lining the streets in such cities as London, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, and Sheffield. They had not been accustomed to such a sight in the wide, free spaces of Australia, New Zealand, or Canada. Yet however imperfect may be the present laws in regard to the housing of the poor, and however difficult it may be to enforce them, no Christian in whom breathes the spirit of Jesus Christ can rest contented, so long as whole families are herded together in single rooms under conditions which prohibit self-respect, if not indeed modesty, even when the single room is free, as it often is not, from the intrusion of a lodger or lodgers not related to the family at all. No doubt it is impracticable to clear away all at once the insanitary areas of an ancient city. Yet something has already been achieved by municipal regulations, as in Birmingham and in Manchester itself. It is possible, and therefore it is equitable, to do much more. For my own part, I think the principle of reform will be found to lie in bringing home to the owners of slum property their responsibility for the sources from which they derive their in-

comes. At all events in new cities and in new quarters of old cities the corporation will deserve and enjoy the support of the Church in insisting upon certain conditions of space, light, air, and sanitation, wherever buildings designed as human tenements are put up. In some degree, too, the evil of urban congestion may be alleviated by the facilities of cheap locomotion, as the operatives, both men and women, come to live more and more at a distance from their workshops and factories, and thereby to gain the same physical and moral benefits as their richer fellow-citizens already enjoy. The city of the future will itself, I hope, be beautified by broad streets, by gardens and fountains, by works of art, by the planting of trees at the roadsides, as in the Boulevards of Paris, and by the provision of open spaces as playgrounds. We are still far from realising, except in a sense which is almost a mockery, the prophet's dream, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

But as soon as the problem of housing the people is solved or approaches solution, nay perhaps even before, it becomes incumbent upon the State or upon the municipality to regulate the conditions of labour. Here, too, the Church will unhesitatingly range herself in line with the civic authority. It is a happy reflection that to one

who was a Christian and a Churchman of strong religious convictions, the philanthropic Earl of Shaftesbury, the working-class in this country is indebted for the beneficent legislation which has in a large measure redressed the worst evils of labour, especially as regards the employment of women and children in mines and factories. It were well that all citizens to-day should read the evidence upon which he based his reiterated appeals for the passing of the Acts associated with his honoured name. Truly his life was worthy of the motto inscribed upon his statue in Westminster Abbey, "Love, Serve."

The social and industrial hardships of the present day, so far at least as they affect manual labour, may be said to be trifling in comparison with the evils against which he fought fifty years and more ago. Yet it behoves Christian men and women to be unceasingly watchful against the dangers of fierce commercial rivalry. Is not the employer naturally tempted to get as much work as he can out of the employed? and is not the temptation the more imperious, or the more insidious, when the ownership of large concerns passes out of the hands of individuals to Limited Liability Companies, where the sense of personal obligation is apt to be weakened? Is not sweating an evil still not eradicated in spite of Royal

Commissions and Parliamentary Committees? and does not the evil tend to increase rather than diminish, in spite of all that Trade Unionism has effected, as the population becomes larger, and the competition for employment becomes more acute? The hours of labour have been reduced by law; but are there not a good many workers, my friends the tramway men, for example, who still toil at times for an inordinate number of hours? Holidays have been enacted by the State; but is it not possible that selfishness or short-sightedness or the lust of gain or the secularising temper of the day may encroach upon the best, and most ancient, and most valuable of all periodical holidays—the Sunday? There is a movement for giving all members of the police force in Manchester, as elsewhere, a weekly day of rest; I cannot pretend to decide whether it is feasible or not; it is a matter of expense as well as of charity; and I feel sure that that enlightened public body, the Watch Committee, which has achieved so much good in the city of Manchester, will deal with it not less sympathetically than prudently; but the movement in itself naturally appeals to Christian philanthropy.

I have been asked to refer in this sermon, if only in two or three sentences of it, to the present conditions of labour in the shops and offices

of the city. It would not be right for me to speak upon such a subject as though I had studied it with the care or insight of an expert authority. But the Church cannot ignore the duty of paying regard to the physical and moral welfare of a class so important to the life of a civilised society. For “the servitude of the shop” may be a phrase savouring of exaggeration ; but there is always a danger of the hours of labour being unduly prolonged, there is a danger of employees receiving harsh treatment, especially in times of illness. The State itself has acknowledged the necessity of guarding young girls against the fatigue of waiting at the counter without the chance of sitting down for hours at a stretch. It is always desirable, if it is possible, to raise wages, and still more to prevent the normal rate of wages being cut down by arbitrary fines. It is said, too, that employees are sometimes kept for hours, and even for days, without remuneration on the chance of work turning up. Then the system of “living-in” is not only distasteful to many young persons, but it is, or may be, seriously detrimental to the associations of home-life. Upon the whole it would not perhaps be safe to say more than that any organised effort to ameliorate the conditions of labour, for women especially, in shops and offices would be followed with deeply sympathetic

interest by the Church and by Christian men and women all over the country.

It remains only that in closing my sermon I should specify three or four ways in which the Church by inculcating a Christian spirit may lift the city as it were a little nearer to the “new Jerusalem” which comes down from God out of heaven.

1. There is the duty of diminishing the temptations to evil.

You cannot, it is said, make men virtuous by passing Acts of Parliament. No, but you can go far to make them vicious by not passing Acts of Parliament. It is the office of the State, and of each subordinate municipality, to render virtue easy and vice difficult. I claim, therefore, and I claim in behalf of the Church, that all citizens, and most of all the citizens who are young or poor, should be enabled to go their way about the city to and from their daily work in peace, without being harassed by unnecessary solicitations to drink or lust. Let the opportunities of sin, if they exist, be lessened; let them, as far as possible, be hidden; let them not be flaunted in the eyes of the world.

2. It is the office of the Church to promote sympathy between the classes of which society is composed. If she does not and cannot take

side entirely with one class as against another, with the rich or the poor, with masters or servants, with the employers or the employed, the reason is that she aspires to show herself the friend of all. She holds that all alike are "members one of another," and that in the long run, as human society becomes wiser and better, the interests of all will be bound to be not antagonistic, nor even divergent, but identical. This is the true Christian gospel of capital and labour.

3. The missions of Christian men and women, the schools and clubs, the agencies of good in the slums of great cities are powerful instruments of social unity. There is no use in talking about human needs, there is not much use in praying over them, unless the prayer issues in action ; but I do in my heart believe that, if we whose lot in life is not poverty-stricken will go down among the poor, the afflicted, and the unfortunate, if we will help them and comfort them, if we will be their friends not in word only, but in deed, we may do something, if it be but little, in our day to heal the wounds of the social organism. For there is no power on earth like Christian love.

Lastly, the churches should be made the homes of the people. They should be open all day ; for they are the only quiet places which the poor can call their own. It is the lack of privacy which is

such a trial in the life of the poor. But within the walls of the church they can find peace. The clergyman is or ought to be their friend. They all possess a claim upon his services. If I or any one of my brethren can render any help, however poor it may be, to a stricken soul, what a joy, what a benediction it is !

I cannot say more ; but it seems to me that, by some such means as I have tried to indicate, a city like Manchester may be elevated and sanctified, may approximate to the idea of the holy city which “comes down from God out of heaven.” So the poet writes :—

“ I will not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till I have built Jerusalem
In England’s green and pleasant land.”

Holy Scripture, as I said, begins with a garden ; it ends with a city. Is it possible that the solution of the social problem to which I have drawn your thoughts for awhile in my sermon this evening may to some extent lie in the union of both, in the garden-city as it has lately been called ? The first Paradise was only a garden ; what will the second be ? It is safe, I think, to declare that the problem of providing labour with healthy moral conditions has nowhere been so nearly solved as in

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settlements like Bourneville or Port Sunlight, or like the garden-city now established at Letchworth, or the garden village opened only yesterday in the Potteries. Be it so or not, neither the State nor the Church can rest until in the cities of the future every man and woman who labours for the public good finds a fair opportunity of living a decent, happy, serviceable, and Christian life. So will the city of God on earth reflect the image of His city in heaven. So will human eyes even here and now behold, though afar off, the vision of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

XIII

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FAMILY

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son!

“Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”—JOHN xix. 25-27.

BEFORE the curtain falls, as it were, upon the sacred drama which entrals the devotional spirit of the Church at the present season of the Christian year—the drama whose acts are the Betrayal, the Judgment, the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of the Lord—there is one brief incident of it upon which I am anxious for a few minutes to concentrate your attention.

In the agony of the Crucifixion Jesus Christ thought not of Himself but of others. At the foot of His cross stood side by side the two persons whose relation to His own life had been most intimate and most sacred, the Virgin Mother who had borne Him and the disciple whom He loved. They stood there, and He was going to

leave them. What better service could He render them at the last than to leave them together?

“He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” He gave His disciple a mother; He gave His mother a son; He gave them both a home. From that hour it would seem their union continued, until the mysterious knowledge of Himself, the awful and holy secret which was the prerogative of the Virgin Mother alone, was at last buried with her in her unknown and unrecorded grave.

It is worth while to consider how the twofold nature of the Lord, Divine as well as human, necessarily affected His attitude towards the common domestic ties and duties of the world. He was a son, but He was not and could not be quite as other sons.

The circumstances of His preternatural birth must have been ever present to the Blessed Virgin's mind. The critics argue that not much is said about that birth in the Gospels or in the New Testament generally; but who could tell of it except the Virgin herself, and was she likely to speak of it to everybody? It was almost as impossible that she should speak of it as that she should cease to think of it. “Mary,”

it is written, "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

She must have known why it was that, when the child Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem, and was found sitting among the Doctors of the Law in the temple itself, and she cried to Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," He made answer, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" as if He would say, "Do not mistake My true Fatherhood; it is, as thou at least My mother knowest, not of earth but of heaven." She too must have apprehended His meaning, even if to others it may have seemed dark or harsh, when she came with His brethren to speak to Him, and He "stretched forth His hand towards His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." The only relationship which He could acknowledge in its full sense was spiritual.

But while nobody can understand the life of Jesus Christ who loses sight of His twofold nature, and of the interweaving of the Divine and human strands within His nature, it were no less an impiety than an injustice to suggest that He did not recognise the relationships of

earthly flesh and blood.] Look at the beginning of His life, look at its end. As a child, even after the assertion of His Divine Sonship in the temple at Jerusalem, He went back quietly with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth and was "subject to them." He spent His boyhood as the carpenter's son in the workshop of His putative father. What a lesson is this fact in the dignity of labour! what a lesson too in the virtue of filial obedience! It is possible that some youth who is sitting here to-night, or who is known to some one sitting here, has of late acted wilfully and selfishly in defiance of his parents' authority, as though he knew better than they what he ought to do. But did not Jesus Christ know better than His earthly parents, yet was He not obedient to them? It is with a feeling of sacred astonishment that I think of Joseph or even Mary saying to Him, "Son, do this, or do not do that," and of His doing it or forbearing to do it.

Or pass to the last scene of His life. Look at Him as He hangs upon the cross; listen as He speaks: "Behold thy son! Behold thy mother!" The utter self-forgetfulness, the ineffable tenderness, of the words have sunk deep down into the heart of Christian humanity. Is there anybody here who, as I speak, recalls with sorrow, and perhaps with shame, some act or word of incon-

siderate cruelty to his mother? anybody who is paining his mother's heart even now? He forgets the truth which the poet sings:—

“A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive.”

But think, oh! think how the Saviour on the cross cared for His mother, how He could not yield His holy soul to His heavenly Father's keeping until He had given her a friend, a guardian, a son, a home. “From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

It cannot be wrong, brethren, to see here the consecration of home-life. For the final thought of Jesus Christ for His mother must, to Christian hearts, be ever unspeakably sacred.

What a home was that in which the mother of the Lord and His beloved disciple at His own bidding lived together! Can there ever in the world have been such sacred conversation as theirs, when the Virgin would lift the veil a little from the mystery of the Divine Childhood, as she told St. John perhaps the story afterwards enshrined in St. Luke's Gospel, and the beloved disciple would confess to her how he had gained his personal insight into the Divinity of the Lord on whose breast he had leaned at the Last Supper. “That disciple took her unto his

own home." If only all homes were like that home, would not the world become a vestibule of heaven?

England is or was the land of happy homes. Yet there is some reason to fear that the conditions of modern life among the higher social class, as among the lower, are increasingly prejudicial to the old domestic virtues. It is not long since I was speaking in this cathedral of the squalid, insanitary, crowded tenements which are all that the poor can call their homes in the slums and alleys of great cities like Manchester. What sort of domestic life is practicable in them? But at the opposite end of the social scale the rich, too, are in danger of sacrificing the virtues and graces of home life by the habit of living in hotels, of taking meals in clubs and restaurants, of spending hurried week-ends in country houses, and of either begetting no children, as the declining birth-rate proves, or handing over their children when they are born to the care of nurses and governesses and schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. The sense of home is dying out, and soon the English world, it may be feared, will have unlearnt the tender magic of the familiar lines, the composition of one who may be said to have ever desired and never realised the felicity of home life:—

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“ Mid pleasures and palaces tho’ we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.”

It is difficult to say or think what greater need of English society can be specified at the present time than the revival of Christian home-life. For all public or civic virtue springs from the home. Forgive me, then, if I dwell upon two or three main principles underlying, as I conceive, the proper dignity of home-life. It is these and these alone which can render English homes once again the fortresses of high personal character.

The first is stability.

The relationships of domestic life must be permanent ; they cannot be shifted ; they cannot be created to-day and destroyed to-morrow ; they must endure. A father is always a father, a son is always a son ; no lapse of time, no vicissitude of fortune, can change that essential relationship. But is a husband to be always a husband and a wife always a wife ? or is that relationship to be transitory ?

You know that a Royal Commission is now sitting upon the difficult and delicate question of divorce. The Church possesses an indefeasible right of imposing upon all her members her own matrimonial laws, those laws being derived from the absolute authority of her Divine Lord and

Master. But the laws of the State may be, and perhaps must be, more or less different from the laws of the Church, because the State includes a great number of citizens who are not Churchmen and Churchwomen, and a certain number who are not even Christians. Yet the stability of marriage is an interest vital to the State as well as to the Church. The cheap, speedy, facile dissolution of the marriage-bond has everywhere proved to be the precursor of national decay. For the State depends upon the family, and the life of the family implies that parents who bring children into the world should be responsible for bringing them up.

Human nature then being such as it is, if divorce is made easy, there will be many divorcees ; if divorce is made difficult, there will be few. If the relation between husband and wife becomes terminable at will, then, as soon as any friction occurs between them, they will fly apart ; but if it is permanent, they will try to see, like sensible people, how they can live together in spite of occasional jars. What fine scorn Thomas Carlyle used to cast half a century ago upon “marriage by the month,” as he called it ! Let me quote some of his words : “In all human relations *permanency* is what I advocate ; *nomadism*, continual change, is what I perceive to be prohibitory of any good whatsoever.” And again : “From

the Sacrament of marriage downwards human beings used to be manifoldly related one to another and each to all ; and there was no relation among human beings, just or unjust, that had not its grievances and difficulties, its necessities on both sides to bear and forbear. But henceforth, be it known, we have changed all that by favour of Heaven ; ' the voluntary principle ' has come up, which will itself do the business for us ; and now let a new Sacrament, that of *Divorce*, which we call emancipation and spout off on our platforms, be universally the order of the day ! Have men considered whither all this is tending, and what it certainly enough betokens ? ”

Brethren, in a Christian land the laws of the Church and the State as affecting Holy Matrimony should be brought as nearly as possible into union. But, even apart from the laws of the Church, I hold that the State in the interest of Society itself will probably insist upon three conditions at least as affecting the matrimonial relation, viz. :—

- (a) That there should be complete equality between men and women.
- (b) That the immoral person, whether man or woman, who violates the marriage-tie, should be treated as guilty of an offence against society, *i.e.* not merely as a sinner, but as a criminal.

(c) That divorce should not be legalised except for the one offence which our Lord Himself regarded, or has been held by a great part of the Christian Church to have regarded, as justifying it; nor should it ever become operative except after a definite period of time from the offence which occasions it. For in a large proportion of the cases where separation orders are granted to-day the result is that the parties so separated, but not divorced, come together again after a while, and live once more as man and wife.

Let me pass to the second principle of healthy and happy domestic life. It is sympathy.

For no human relation or association can last without a mutual sympathy among its members. The domestic relations of husband and wife, of parents and children, of master or mistress and servants, call for sympathy in the especial degree. There is room in them all for the temper of bearing and forbearing. If a husband is arbitrary or a wife is nagging, if a father is unreasonable or a child is disobedient, the relation in which each of them stands to the other at once loses its charm. What a satire, indeed, it is upon Christian civilisation that in the present twentieth century of the Church of Christ, a Society endowed with large funds should need to exist for the sole purpose of protecting children against cruelty,

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and chiefly against the cruelty of their own parents !

Is it possible that domestic quarrels exist even now among certain members of this congregation ?

Forgive me, then, if I say to one who is here, You asked that woman to be your wife, she gave herself to you ; you loved her then, she trusted you then ; shall not the memory of the hour when you and she knelt together before the altar of the Most High solemnise and sanctify the life of your home to-day ?

Or again : You are the parents of those children ; you brought them into the world, they owe their being to you. Do not set them an evil example. Do not fret them out of their lives. It is a wise counsel which the apostle gives : " Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Let your very discipline be tempered by sympathy. I was reading only the other day of a little boy who said with tears in his eyes : " Grandmamma, *everything* I do can't surely be wrong, but you *always* say ' Don't. ' "

It remains only to plead for sympathy towards the domestic servants who do so much for our daily comfort and often, alas ! get such scanty thanks for doing it.

But there is yet a third principle of a true Christian home-life. It is sanctity.

The home needs to be consecrated by religion. There is no perfect home-life, except where father and mother and children and servants can kneel down together. The ark in Obed-Edom's house was the symbol and promise of a Divine benediction.

It is the blessing, as it is the function, of Christianity to hallow the domestic relations.

You are a father ; shall not your fatherhood aim at reflecting, however faintly, the spirit of Him whom we all address as Our Father in heaven ?

You are a mother ; will you not try to imitate the beauty and purity, the sacred self-repression of the Holy Virgin Mother ?

You are a son ; will you not learn obedience and humility from Him who was both the Son of God and the Son of Man ?

You are a servant ; did not He say of Himself that He was among His own disciples “as one that serveth” ?

Is not your marriage itself a sacramental union, typifying the relation of the Saviour Christ to His bride the Church ?

Brethren, it is my wish, my hope, my prayer that this poor sermon of mine may lift our hearts a little nearer to the high and holy Christian conception of family life. May we become better

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fathers and mothers, children, masters and servants; may the relations initiated in time be consummated in eternity! A great scholar and divine, Dr. Arnold, was wont to say that he could picture no brighter ideal than that of a whole family transplanted without the loss of a single member from earth to heaven.

We began this sermon at the foot of the cross on Calvary. Let us end it there. We gaze upon the Divine Sufferer, the Divine Saviour. His eyes are fixed, His parched lips move. We hear His words: “Behold thy son! Behold thy mother!” It is the consecration of the Christian home-life then and for ever.

“And from that hour that disciple took her into his own home.”

XIV

THE CHURCH AND THE STAGE

“Herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth.”
—JOHN iv. 37.

THE service of this evening is primarily a service of thanksgiving for the kindly fruits of the earth which have been once more safely gathered in at the harvest. There is indeed ample reason for gratitude to Him who year after year, in His gracious Providence, “giveth good to all flesh; for His mercy endureth for ever.” No thought, perhaps, is more suggestive or impressive, none appeals more strongly to the deepest sentiments of human nature, than that, while population increases in all or most parts of the world with a reckless rapidity, it is kept alive by the ever-recurring munificence of Heaven. “The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself.” It is her gift, her benevolence; and but for the offices of nature in the sunshine and the rain and the fertilising energy of the soil, the science of agriculture would expend itself in vain. You may sow your seed where God wills it not to be sown, as upon the floor of this church, you may watch it and

tend it with assiduous care, but it will bring no fruit to perfection, because man is impotent to achieve such a result apart from the regular operation of Providence.

The shifting circumstances of civilisation have, it is true, somewhat modified what may be called the religious conception of the harvest. Time was when the annual feast of the ingathering of the fruits of the earth was felt to evoke a reverent appreciation of the self-sufficiency belonging to each particular country. Where the seed was sown in those days, there the corn was reaped, there the bread was produced, and there it kept the people in life. The world was a multitude of separate provinces then ; it is all one inseparable area now. So intimately is the wide world knit together by the agencies of inter-communication that the harvest at home counts for little to the inhabitants of the British Isles in comparison with the harvests in the United States of America, in Canada, in India, in Russia, in Argentina. To-day, then, Christian piety, while it gratefully accepts the boon of Nature, reflects upon the unity of the whole human family, associated as it is by ties of sympathetic interest and by the interaction of social and economic laws, and not less strongly by dependence upon one Creative Will and by spiritual indebtedness to one Redeeming Sacrifice.

Jesus Christ in a single sentence points the lesson of human necessary interdependence. "Herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth." There can be no reaping without the sowing. There can be no fruit of the sowing without the reaping. But the sower and the reaper are not the same persons. "One soweth and another reapeth."

Certainly it is true that in the mills and factories and workshops of great cities the development of machinery tends to produce an increasing specialisation or differentiation in the conditions of labour. Each article of clothing, for example, is the product not of one person, but of a number of persons labouring independently and individually for one end. No one workman nowadays produces a hat or a boot. Adam Smith, in the beginning of "The Wealth of Nations," estimates that it may require as many as eighteen separate hands to make a pin. But whether it be few persons or many who manufacture an article, they manufacture it not for themselves but for others. The producer is not generally the consumer. "One soweth and another reapeth."

Our Lord, in accordance with His custom, as He looked upon the cornfields "white already to harvest," read a spiritual lesson in this aspect of the harvest. He was sitting by Jacob's Well—

the one wholly undisputed site of His earthly life in all the Holy Land. He had been talking with the Samaritan woman, and had told her that He was the Messiah or the Christ. Meanwhile His disciples had gone into the city to buy food ; they had brought it to Him and had prayed Him to eat it, but His answer was, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of ;” “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.” Then it was that He lifted His eyes to the whitening harvest-fields which spread before Him, and He bade His disciples lay to heart one special truth of which the harvest in its spiritual interpretation is silently eloquent, “Herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth.”

The truth, as He meant it, would inspire some grateful reflections. “I sent you,” He says, “to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”

Who is there of all of us, brethren, that can afford to lose his sense of profound indebtedness to the past ? Who does not recognise and realise that it would be impossible for him to be what he is and to do what he does were it not for the self-sacrificing work of labourers, too often forgotten or ignored, who have gone before ? “What hast

thou," says the Apostle, "that thou hast not received?"

Think for a moment of the means and appliances of civilisation; recall how vastly they alleviate the burden, and accentuate the interest, or embellish the character of human life; consider how difficult it is at times even to learn the histories or the very names of the inventors by whom they have been brought into the service of humanity, and then say if the present does not lie under a mighty weight of obligation to the dead past. "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

"Other men laboured"—yes, and many a time they suffered for their labours. No record in human history is more touching—I had almost said more saddening—than the tale of the inventors, the explorers, the reformers, who have advanced the bounds of human knowledge or human virtue, and for their high service, so far from being honoured, have been misrepresented, abused, reviled, persecuted, crucified. They have sown the good seed—have sown it often in tears—they have laboured, and other men, such as you and I, have unworthily entered into their labours. Yet it is a beautiful and sacred thought which religion inspires, that no act of greatness or goodness done upon earth is altogether thrown away. Like the

drops of rain falling earthwards, our little charities help to swell the “river whose streams make glad the city of God”; and sometimes it may be that in the arid desert of life a thin line of verdure, an oasis with green grass and a few palm trees, where all around is dark and dead, shows how a Christian life, though silent and secret, like a spring of fresh water, has become a fertilising power. For what is influence, that mysterious personal energy, but, as its name implies, the flowing of such a stream over human lives?

But there is another and graver side of the picture. It is not only good which passes onwards from soul to soul. “One soweth and another reapeth,” but he may not always reap the golden grain. The greatest of all dramatic poets has hinted that vice may enjoy a yet surer immortality than virtue.

“The evil that men do lives after them ;
The good is oft interréed with their bones.”

Let us hope and pray the good may not be so buried ; it is only too certain that the evil survives.

Life were comparatively a simple matter if, when we do evil, and do it more often, perhaps, in thoughtlessness than wickedness, we could bear all its consequences ourselves. For then we might

just set our lips and steel our hearts and suffer in silence. What is so dreadful an element of evil is that evil does not die with him who works it ; it lives, it spreads, it flows onwards and outwards, and they who suffer for it may be and often are dear friends and innocent children ; nay, even souls of whom the evil-doer never hears.

This is the law of heredity, of personality ; it is the law of continuing influence ; it is, perhaps, the most solemn fact in the world. "Herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth." A saintly preacher of modern days, Mr. Angell James, was wont to confess that in the holiest offices of religion some ill passage of a book which he had read long years before would sometimes force itself upon his memory and cloud his soul with thoughts of shame. Because this is so, Our Lord has taught in language of high and awful significance that for every idle word which men speak they shall give account before the judgment-seat of God. May I not plead with you in this church to remember, and never in your lightest hours to forget, the vital potency of influence for good or for evil ? Every act and word of ours may tell upon countless souls. May God grant us not to see the misery of souls which we have injured, and, it may be, ruined by our example ; but to know something of the joy which angels

may be thought to feel when one poor sinner through their pleading turns to God.

“One soweth and another reapeth.” It is the lesson which we all need to lay to heart, and none of us more than the representatives of the dramatic profession who have been specially invited to be present at this service to-night.

I am not fond of preaching sermons to a particular class of persons in the congregation. To isolate actors and actresses from other men and women is to pay no compliment to the stage. It is to violate the truth of human nature. We are all alike in the sight of God; we are all stained with sin; we are all responsible to the Almighty Power; we are all moved by the appealing voice of the Saviour. We all in our best moments long to live the Divine eternal life.

The theatrical profession is like any other—a profession honourable in itself, with its own charm and its own opportunity, but also not without its own difficulties and temptations.

It has been a mistake too frequently made in the history of the Christian Church to treat the stage as though it were intrinsically evil; the sure effect of any such treatment is and has been to alienate the stage from the Church, and so to render the stage contemptuous, or at least oblivious, of the Church and of the sanctions

and obligations which the Church seeks to enforce. It is the sympathy of Christian men and Christian women with the stage, and the loyalty of actors and actresses to the Church of Christ, which afford the sole sufficient guarantee for the dignity and purity of the drama.

It is true, indeed, that there have been times when the stage has sunk to a low level of morality. Nobody, perhaps, would deny that Jeremy Collier's famous attack upon the stage, at the time when it was made, was fully justified ; yet even then it was the dramatists rather than the actors who were in fault, as Dryden acknowledged in a passage which may not unfairly be described as one of the noblest expressions of a writer's penitence in the history of literature. But the profession of Molière and Garrick and Macready, of Sarah Siddons and Anastasia Robinson—may I not add, on this her birthday, of Jenny Lind ?—(to speak only of the dead) needs no defence against an idle and indiscriminate charge of wickedness.

Yet it is also a mistake to speak of dramatic art as if the stage were naturally suited to become a fountain-head of moral and religious inspiration. The dramatist's object is to please and to instruct, and, so far as may be, to instruct by pleasing. It is, in Shakespeare's language, “ to hold the mirror

up to Nature." The play-writer or the actor cannot be a moralist, or he would cease to be dramatic. But he may appeal to the highest instincts of humanity; and his appeal will not, I think, be made in vain; for if it is anywhere possible to read the true heart of a people, and to learn that it does not beat untruly, I would appeal to the attitude of the pit or the gallery towards the characters of a play enacted on the stage. All that it is fair to ask of actors, managers, and of those who write for the stage or appear behind the footlights is that they will be faithful to nature, and especially to the best and higher moods of nature, that they will not harp perpetually upon one string only, and that the lowest string, in nature's scale, and that, as far as lies in their power, they will penetrate beneath the surface to the spiritual and eternal verities of humanity.

Perhaps it will help them in their high purpose to reflect that among the churches of Christendom the Church of England has long stood conspicuous for the respect which she has paid to the dramatic profession. Despite the anathemas of the fathers in ancient, and of Roman Catholics and Puritans alike in modern days, she has resolutely declined to put any sort of stigma upon actors and actresses. Molière, as all the world knows, was buried hastily

and secretly by torchlight in the dead of night without any ceremony or benediction of a religious character. But Shakespeare lies in the chancel of the Parish Church within his own native town of Stratford-on-the-Avon. It is probable that some members of the congregation can recall the bitter verses in which Voltaire lamented the fate of his favourite, poor Adrienne Lecouvreur, whose dead body had been cast out like a dog's into the gutter in the streets of Paris, and the scorn which he poured out on the Church of France, as he contrasted that Church with the Church of England, which almost at the same time had laid the earthly remains of Mrs. Oldfield to rest within the hallowed walls of the Abbey Church of Westminster. Nor is she the only actor or actress who has won a memorial in the Abbey. Betterton lies there, Garrick, and Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Brace-girdle; there, too, are cenotaphs of Mrs. Siddons and her brother John Kemble; and it was my privilege, when I held office in the Abbey Church, to give my voice at the Dean's invitation for the burial of the great actor of our own day, Sir Henry Irving, in the spot so long left vacant in Poets' Corner, close beside the grave of Garrick.

The Church of England has ever delighted in doing honour to the members of the theatrical profession; may I respectfully invite them in

return to show themselves not unworthy of that honour? May I commend to them the noble words in which Macready, at the dinner given to him upon his retirement from the stage, took leave of the distinguished party which had assembled to bid him farewell? "I will venture," he said, "to express one parting hope, that the rising actors may keep the loftiest outlook, may hold the most elevated views, of the duties of their calling."

"One soweth and another reapeth."

With that lesson I began, and with that I will end. It has happened to me, in view of this service, to receive a good many letters begging me to plead for this or that reform in the theatrical profession —one of them especially pleading with sincere earnestness for a greater consideration of managers towards the young members of their company, particularly in regard to Sunday labour. But I have no such knowledge or authority as would entitle me to offer counsel upon matters of detail. All that I may do—and I do it in the spirit of Macready's words—is to beg that playwrights and managers and actors will alike promote a high and noble estimate of their calling. For they, too, are servants of the Most High; they may accomplish or violate His will. It may be that there is no surer index of a nation's moral health than the character of its plays. There is no deeper interest

of a nation than the innocence of its recreations. For he who can laugh pure, happy, sacred laughter, and desire no other, is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

Brethren, I hope, I could almost believe that this service, so memorable in its character, will not wholly fade from your minds. How can I better end it than with the classical story, which you whose lives are associated with the stage probably know well, but others in the congregation may possibly like to hear, of Garrick's farewell to the stage?

On the final night when he acted in tragedy, he played "King Lear" to Miss Younge's "Cordelia." As the curtain fell for the last time they stood hand in hand. Without a word they passed, still hand in hand, from the stage to the green-room. The company followed; there was a long silence. At length Garrick spoke. "Bessie," he said, "this is the last time I shall ever be your father, *the last time.*" Miss Younge replied in a few affectionate words, expressing the hope that before they parted he would give her a father's blessing. She spoke seriously, and he took her words as serious. She bowed her head, and, lifting his hands, he prayed that God would bless her; then looking slowly round upon the company, he murmured, "May God bless you all!"

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It were almost a presumption in me to make his words my own. Yet, as I know that I am speaking in this church to some members of the profession which he adorned, you will, I think, forgive me if I say to them, not without a deep feeling for the difficulties and even the dangers of their life, but with a keen sense of its responsibilities and opportunities in relation to the moral and spiritual welfare of our country—if I say to them in my last sentence, as a Christian to Christians, May God bless you all !

XV

REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”—HEB. xii. 28.

BEFORE the thought of the late king’s death begins to fade in our minds and in our hearts, as it must fade soon or late—for Time, the kindly medicine, doth alleviate all pains—will you dwell with me for a few minutes upon one difference which it has made, at least for a while, in the national life ?

I do not think anybody who is sitting here will deny that the nation was profoundly affected, profoundly solemnised almost in an hour by those unforeseen events which followed one another with such awe-inspiring rapidity—the illness, the death, the lying-in-state, and the funeral of King Edward VII. There was a new sentiment abroad ; there was a new spiritual atmosphere. Shall I be wrong in saying that we all desired—even those of us who have not always led religious lives as well as those who have long known the blessing of religion—we desired to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”?

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For this sanctification of a country, I might, indeed, say of an Empire, our gratitude is owing especially to her Majesty, the widowed Queen Alexandra, to the present King and Queen, and to the Royal Family. You and I, brethren, may not feel altogether at home in the life of a court; we may dislike the flattery of kings and queens to their faces; we may dislike still more the calumny of kings and queens behind their backs. It is possible that in the past history of our land the bishops and highly placed clergy of the Church of England have at times strangely and sadly forgotten the duty of "speaking of" the Divine "testimonies even before kings." But if there is any lesson which I would respectfully impress upon you as we stand to-night beneath the shadow of a national loss, it must be that we shall best show our loyalty to the Crown by refusing to credit and still more by refusing to circulate any opprobrious story about royal persons, unless and until it is publicly proved to be founded in truth. At all events, the Royal Family has in the last fortnight set an example which the nation may well follow. For in the hour of the late king's illness and death his wife and his children turned instinctively, as you and I would turn, to the solace and support of religion. In no humble family could there have been more prayer, more devotion, a more

reverent acquiescence in the discipline of bereavement, a more complete resignation to the Divine Will than at Buckingham Palace. All this has strongly moved the heart of the people. It has elevated and consecrated the national life; it has drawn the country nearer to the throne, and the throne nearer to the country; it has revealed us in our true character to ourselves and to one another. We know now that we are one people, and still at heart a deeply religious people—one in personal devotion to the throne, and one, too, in reverent dependence upon the Almighty Will.

Of all human events none, perhaps, is so mournfully impressive as the passing away of a great king. He has been exalted so far above his subjects; he has been so much praised and honoured; he has lived a life of such splendour and dignity; he has been the object of so much passionate loyalty; he has seemed to impersonate in himself so large a measure of the nation's imperishable being.

And then he dies. In a moment he is brought down to the level of the poorest and lowliest of his subjects. All the wealth and grandeur, the pageantry, the magnificence of his regal office—it is his no more. "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

So vivid a contrast touches the springs of

human tears. In the vast congregation which gathered nine days ago within the ancient and hallowed walls of this cathedral church, there was not a soul unmoved by sorrow for the dead king and by sympathy with his widow and family. We realised then the transitoriness of human interests and aspirations. “What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!” was Burke’s exclamation in the presence of a sudden death, and it might have been ours; for if we could have so far broken through the native characteristic English reserve as to show our hearts one to another, we should, I think, have said, “For the greatest of us, as for the least, there is one thing only which counts at the last. Has he ‘served God with reverence and godly fear’? has he spent his life in obedience to his Maker, has he wrought benefit to his fellow-men, the children of the same Almighty Father?”

“Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

If that is the true temper of Christian citizenship, if it is in a peculiar sense the temper inspired by the tragedy of the king’s death, it may be well that I should suggest to you this evening two or three aspects in which it may influence the lives of others and our own.

First of all, it proclaims the seriousness of life—it forbids frivolity. I do not say, I do not need to

say, that it forbids sinfulness. The sin of a lifetime never looks so dreadful or so shameful as beside the open grave. But there are lives spent not perhaps sinfully, not at least in wilful deliberate sin, but idly, selfishly, frivolously. How poor these lives seem to-day ! You know, or you may know, a man who pleases himself without a thought of anybody else ; he is rich, perhaps, and he spends the days and years on the turf or at places of amusement or in mere idle dissipation. I do not wish to use hard words about him ; but, at the most, it is difficult to see how any human being is or can be the better or the happier for his existence. A few days ago I found myself conversing in a railway carriage with a stranger. I could not make out what his occupation in life was, until I noticed a big umbrella over his head ; then I knew, and afterwards he told me, he was a bookmaker. I hope I did not say a word to cause him pain. But I could not help thinking within myself : " What a life is this man's ! How little good he does to the State of which he is a citizen ! What will have been the value of such a life as his when he comes to die ? " At ordinary times such a man may perhaps incur no special blame. But to-day, by the dead king's grave in the hour of the nation's mourning, what a poor creature he looks ! " I wish you may be serious," wrote Oliver Cromwell to his

son ; "the times require it." Yes, they require it now. The new king's message to his people evinces his sense of grave and solemn responsibility. It is instinct with the spirit of "reverence and godly fear." Let us try each of us here to reflect his serious spirit in our own lives. You know, or you may know, the woman who is worldly and fashionable, who lies in bed all the morning, and when she gets up talks of "killing time"—that most precious gift of God which is only too soon lost ; she knows not what happiness is except in balls and bridge-parties, or nights turned into days, and Sundays into saturnalia of pleasure-taking. Does not such an one present a sorry appearance beside that bier at which the widowed Queen Mother has lately sought the grace and comfort of the Most High in her bereavement ? What does the woman of society contribute to the nation's strength ? Who is the better or the wiser for her life ? Where is the "reverence and godly fear" which is the glory of womanhood ?

Brethren, there is a voice which cries to-night, Be serious. Life is earnest, life is solemn. It is given once and once only. It lasts but a span. Yet its issues are eternal. Let us try to do something for somebody. If you are making or helping to make a pin I respect you ; if you are squandering a fortune I do not respect you. Above all, if

you are seeking at whatever personal cost to bind up some broken heart in the name of Jesus Christ, you are a fellow-worker for humanity with Him.

Again, the voice prescribes dutifulness. No nobler word is there in the English language. It has been the inspiring motto of the most patriotic lives in the history of Great Britain. Napoleon, it is said, always spoke to his soldiers of glory ; Wellington spoke to his soldiers of duty. It was with the word "duty" upon his lips that Nelson died.

I do not think I misinterpret the thoughts which have been surging in our hearts during the last three weeks, if I say we have been humbly asking ourselves in the presence of death, "Have I done my duty ?"

My duty to my parents. Am I trying to brighten and sweeten their lives ? Am I unselfish and considerate in my home ? Do I value and embrace every opportunity of rendering some service to my family, and, above all, to my father and my mother ? The time will come when they, too, will be laid in the cold earth, and oh ! how sorry we shall be then, if we have acted undutifully to them !

My duty to my neighbour.

You know who is our neighbour, as Jesus Christ defined him in the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan. Every one who is near to us, every one who needs us, every one to whom we can

reach out a helping hand. For there is no one of us so poor or so humble that it is out of his power to help somebody else. So we question ourselves in the sanctuary of our own hearts, “Am I doing good to anybody else? am I anybody’s friend? do I go to visit anybody who is in solitude or trouble? do I speak the sympathetic word? do I render the charitable service?” How I wish we could each say, ere we lie down to rest at night, I have tried to do something for somebody!

My duty to my country.

The king is dead; his work is done; he has gone home and has “ta’en his wages.” May not we, too, try to serve our country? There is so much tendency, most of all at the times of political elections, to think what the citizens can get for themselves from the State. How far nobler were it that they should think what they can give the State! One thing at least we can all give—not money, perhaps, nor ability, nor distinction, but the inestimable treasure of a pure, honest, upright, devoted, patriotic Christian life. That is the best gift of any citizen to his State; for it is good citizens who make a noble State. Brethren, I preach to you what I may call the higher patriotism. It is the spirit which will not consent to degrade or enfeeble the nation by intemperance, by impurity, by selfishness, by luxury, by vice;

the spirit of citizens who aspire by their personal virtue and by their public service to elevate and consecrate the national life.

Seriousness and dutifulness — these are two elements in the greatness of a nation. For them the England of to-day cries aloud. There remains a third element, indispensable and inestimable. It is godliness. The text runs, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” When I last stood in this pulpit, I said we were a more religious people than we had been a fortnight before. The king’s death had solemnised all our hearts. The mystery of existence brooded over us. How little we know or can hope to know! What is life? what is death? and what comes after death? Where is the dead king’s soul now? In the face of such mystery we cannot but throw ourselves, as it were, with a tremulous faith upon the heart of the Almighty. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. It was by an instinct as fine as it was sure that the one hymn ordered for use in all the Memorial Services was that stately poem which is the common basis of all religious creeds :—

“ O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

As we reflect upon the narrow bounds of our own knowledge, do not the discords and disputes of the Christian world seem painful and pitiful? We know so little; others, too, know so little. It is possible that they may be right. It is possible that we may be wrong. We will not, we cannot, be angry with them. We and they are journeying slowly, nay, often sorrowfully, to the same goal. God grant we may all meet at last.

So it is that in politics, and still more in religion, the solemnising, reconciling power of a national sorrow has shed its benediction upon men's hearts.

This is the temper which befits a nation, exalted as ours has been to a pre-eminent dignity, and laden as ours is with a unique responsibility, among the nations of the world, in the hour of national mourning. It is in the language of the text a temper of "reverence and godly fear." We feel that we are one people, we feel that we are a religious people. We recognise that nations like individuals are called of God; they are searched, tested, justified, or condemned in His sight. "Before Him," says the Son of Man, speaking of Himself in His picture of the great assize, "Before Him shall be gathered all the nations." So there falls upon the nation in the presence of death the hush, as it were, of sanctification. We go about our old duties in a new spirit. We think less of party

and more of patriotism ; we think less of man and more of God. Our common daily tasks become consecrated when we remember that we discharge them.

“ As ever in our great Taskmaster’s eye.” Even the threatened industrial crisis in Lancashire is, for a while at least, postponed ; it would seem almost sacrilegious just now.

“ Reverence, that angel of the world,” as Shakespeare calls it, touches with overshadowing wing, and hallows as it touches, all the common everyday relations of human life. It is well. Let us pray that that reverence, without which no man can attain his true altitude of spiritual dignity, may not soon pass away.

Brethren, there have been serious epochs, and there have been frivolous epochs, in English history. There was the period of the Commonwealth and there was the period of the Restoration. There was the period before and the period after the Methodist Revival of religion in the eighteenth century. But the epochs of national seriousness were the times when the nation was strong, and the epochs of national frivolity were the times when the nation was weak.

One final thought remains. I have spoken of the king’s death as stirring the heart of the nation to its depth. But it is the teaching of the text

that we, too, "receive a kingdom"—a kingdom "which cannot be moved." Jesus Christ "has made us kings and priests unto God." "I appoint unto you," He said, "a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me." Let us, then, in our behaviour exhibit the instincts of royalty. As we go home to-night, let us go with hearts solemnised and exalted by the spiritual discipline of the memorable three weeks that are past ; let us dedicate ourselves anew to the royal principles by which a nation asserts its faith, its sympathy, its nobility, its undying love of righteousness ; let us pray that we may "find," as our fathers found of old, "the grace whereby we" in our generation "may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

XVI

THE PRINCIPLE OF EPISCOPACY¹

“Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost has made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”—ACTS xx. 28 (R.V.).

THERE are in the Christian Church some few offices of a nature so special, of an interest so peculiar, that they cannot fail to touch the imagination even of spectators, who may be more or less alien from the Faith of Jesus Christ. Such is a confirmation, when the youths and maidens, as they pass in long procession to kneel before the bishop, at whose hands they shall receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, visibly symbolise the hope, the promise, the ever-recurring spring-tide of Christian faith and devotion. Such, too, is an ordination—the formal and solemn setting apart, by a ceremony as ancient as the Church herself, of a body of men who dedicate themselves in the prime of their life as a separate order to preach the Gospel, to minister the sacraments,

¹ A sermon preached in St. Paul’s Cathedral at the consecration of the Venerable J. C. Wright, Archdeacon of Manchester, as Archbishop of Sydney, and the Rev. C. J. Ferguson-Davie as Bishop of Singapore.

to relieve the temporal and spiritual necessities of their brethren, and, as far as may lie in humanity, to represent by their personal and official character the mind and will of Jesus Christ upon earth. Such, above all, is the consecration of bishops to be the chief pastors of the Church in distant and difficult countries ; for who can look upon it and not in memory or anticipation traverse the centuries, both past and future, of the Church's various history, from the day when the Saviour of the world delivered the commission to His first Apostles in the chamber at Jerusalem on the evening after His Resurrection, to the day when He shall come again, after the preaching of the Gospel in all the world, to be the Judge of the living and the dead ? For the ministry of the Church, and the Episcopate especially, is a standing witness to the indefeasible organic continuity of her life.

It is not indeed necessary, nor would the chapter of which my text is a part allow me, to lay an undue stress upon the distinctive nature of Episcopacy. No scholar is unaware that the same persons are called *πρεσβύτεροι*, or "elders," in the seventeenth verse, and *ἐπίσκοποι*, or "bishops," in the twenty-eighth verse of this same chapter. Nor does any scholar doubt that the same two Greek titles were equally applied to the

same person in the Pastoral Epistles. It may be possible to argue with Dr. Harnack that the two titles denoted somewhat different functions ; they may then not have been universally co-extensive, or, in other words, a *πρεσβύτερος* may not have been always and everywhere an *ἐπίσκοπος* too ; but that they were, to some extent at least, interchangeable in the primitive age of the Church is a fact not less certain than significant. It accords with the general fluidity (if I may so express it) of the official language in the New Testament. Take other terms, such as *ἀπόστολος*, *διάκονος* or *διακονία*, *λειτουργία*, even *ἐκκλησία* itself ; and it will be found that there is not one of them which, as soon as it came into Christian usage, was used with the rigid and precise determination of later ecclesiastical history. Nay, the same person might probably be described as exercising at one and the same time the functions of an apostle, a bishop, a presbyter or priest, and a deacon. Perhaps it is a little too much forgotten in the present day that a bishop does not by his consecration surrender his priest's or his deacon's orders, but he adds the episcopal order to them. The essential value of Episcopacy lies, I conceive, not so much in its original exclusiveness as in its historical impressiveness. For if it is conceded, as it clearly must be, that

the titles of “bishop” and of “presbyter” or “priest” were at first interchangeable or applicable at the same time to the same person, it does not follow that Episcopacy, as a form of ecclesiastical government, is not the only system accredited by the history of the Christian Church. There is no need to go back beyond the era of the Ignatian Epistles. The system of government which prevailed without a rival in the Church, both of the East and of the West, from the second century to the fifteenth is the only system possible for a Church which makes her appeal to the principle of historical continuity.

You, my brethren, who are going forth to labour in spheres far away from England—one among the citizens of your own blood, in the most ancient and beautiful colony of the great Australian Commonwealth, the other in a State where the white people are no more than a mere fringe of a large coloured population—may experience some not unnatural disappointment at finding that neither emancipation from the trammels, such as they are, of a Church which is said to be by law established, nor the perplexing and sometimes discouraging proximity of a creed or creeds widely alien from your own has resulted, or as yet promises soon to result, in the fusion of the Episcopalian and non-Episcopalian Christian bodies. It is possible—I

would even say very probable—that in the high and holy cause of Christian reunion the Colonies may lead the way. But whether abroad or at home, the bishops of the Church will act wisely, if they are eager to welcome, but not eager to precipitate, reunion. It will prove ultimately better that the Christian bodies, so long divided, should still remain externally separate for a generation or two than that they should come together only to fly apart once more.

Meanwhile it will be the wisdom of the Church of England to occupy a position not less firmly based than it is stoutly defended. An ecclesiastical theory which is rejected by historians so eminent as Macaulay and Ranke can never be entirely secure. The strength of a chain is, as the proverb says, no greater than the strength of its weakest link; and in the chain of the apostolical succession there are more weak links than one. To quote Hooker's deliberate judgment: "Where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain, in case of such necessity the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination. These

cases of inevitable necessity excepted, none may ordain but only bishops; by the imposition of their hands it is that the Church giveth power of order, both unto presbyters and deacons."

But while it would be alike unsafe and unwise to exaggerate the weight or amount of the evidence for an absolutely unbroken apostolical succession, such a succession as would be altogether invalidated if it could ever be shown to have been forfeited or compromised in any single instance, not less would it be unjust to admit in the historic dignity of the Church that consecrates you bishops even the shadow of evidential inferiority to any other church of Eastern or Western Christendom. Speaking for myself—I possess no title to speak for others—in reference to the Church which now and again launches from the Vatican Hill her unhappy edicts against the validity of Anglican Orders, I feel certain that, if any Church has got—if the Church of Rome has got—the apostolical succession, the Church of England has got it too; but I do not think the claim of the Church of Rome to an indisputable succession is at all free from doubt. In point of fact, if the controversialists of the Church of Rome are hard pressed upon the matter of the apostolical succession, they are generally driven to argue either with Cardinal Newman that the Church of

Rome is God's sole Church, that the validity of the succession is essential to the Church, and that, therefore, God cannot have failed to maintain it in the Church ; or else with the vindicators of the Bull *Apostolicæ Curæ* that the succession depends upon obedience to the Holy See, and therefore upon any severance of a Church from that See must be held *ipso facto* to lapse.

Brethren, while I pray with all my heart that to you may be given, in your arduous and anxious ministry, not only the apostolical succession, but along with it the apostolical success, I counsel you to reflect—yes, oftener than once or twice—ere you stake everything upon any ecclesiastical theory that is not impregnable. For you and for the Church in which you will exercise your ministry, it is enough that Episcopacy, and Episcopacy alone, has been the continuous principle of government in Christendom. We need take no step beyond the undisputed testimony of the past. We do not deny or dispute the interchangeableness of the forms “bishop” and “presbyter” in the New Testament. We claim no more than that the Church from the earliest days of her organised life was governed by bishops, and remained so governed until the Reformation. We regret that some of the Reformed Churches should have abandoned Episcopacy, and should thereby have

created a fresh breach with the history of the Church as constituted both before and after the schism which parted the East of Christendom from the West, and a new difficulty in the way of the reunion for which all true Christian hearts are looking and longing. We hold that, if there shall be a reconciliation leading to reunion between the Church of England and the non-Episcopalian Church bodies at her side, it must be based upon the recognition of Episcopacy, even though no more be demanded from Presbyterian ministers than the conditional re-ordination, parallel, as it would be, to conditional re-baptism, which Archbishop Tillotson long ago suggested as a means of satisfying the religious convictions of Churchmen without putting a slight upon the religious convictions of Nonconformists.

But, be this as it may, I am bold to assure you, my brethren, that in the distant regions of the Empire to which you go you will find the Episcopate to possess a supreme ecclesiastical value. There, as elsewhere, the bishop, in his own person, is a standing witness to the continuous history and the organic unity of the Church. But, if I am not mistaken, he stands also for something more. In the Far East, in the now divided Diocese of Singapore, Labuan, and Sarawak, as in all India, the mind of an Oriental population natu-

rally inclines towards the principle of personal authority. Democracy is as alien in the ecclesiastical as in the secular sphere from the temper and sentiment of the East. It is the instinctive tendency of Orientals to look upwards—for example, for guidance, for command. They do not ask, they do not wish to be consulted; they want to be justly controlled. To them the voice of the majority, if they heed or hear it at all, seems anything rather than the voice of God. It can scarcely be doubtful, then, that the principle of authority, as embodied in Episcopal government, will more powerfully attract and affect an Eastern people than any more democratic system of government in the Christian Church.

But if the monarchical sentiment of the East demands authority, not less does the democratic sentiment in its extreme manifestation beneath the Southern Cross require independence. And this independence, as well as this authority, the Episcopal office supplies. I cannot but look upon the bishops, and still more the archbishops, of the Church in the self-governing colonies, whether of the Australian Commonwealth or elsewhere, as being the persons who, more than any others, are, in virtue of their ecclesiastical status, so far raised above the patronage of the secular power, above the flattering yet humiliating tyranny of the

ballot-box, that they can speak out boldly, in accents which none can misunderstand or misrepresent, for justice, for liberty, for righteousness, for temperance, for purity, for all the various moral influences which in more or less degree help to consecrate and to conserve a Christian State.

So much it has seemed well to say upon the subject of ecclesiastical orders, and especially of the highest order to which you, my brethren, have been called. Let us now, in the light of these considerations, look a little more closely at the text. It cannot be necessary to remind you that the text itself is one which is involved in a special difficulty of exegesis. The phrase, "Feed the Church of God, which He purchased with" (or "through") "His own blood," is not characteristically Pauline. St. Paul speaks frequently—as often, I think, as eleven times—in his Epistles of "the Church of God." "The Church of the Lord," which is the alternative reading here, is not found elsewhere in St. Paul's Epistles, or in the New Testament. Yet nowhere does St. Paul, or any other of the sacred writers, use such an expression as that "God purchased the Church with" (or "through") "His own blood." "The blood of God" is an expression unknown to Holy Scripture. It would appear to me, if indeed the text of

highest authority is retained, that St. Paul, whose mind was ever full of Jesus Christ, must have tacitly reverted in thought at the twenty-eighth verse to Him whom he had named expressly in the twenty-fourth, and that therefore it is not God, but "the Lord Jesus" who is here said to have "purchased the Church with His own Blood."

But my concern and yours, brethren, is not so much the interpretation of the text itself as the instruction which lies in it for the "elders" whom "the Holy Ghost" had made "bishops in the Church of God." "Take heed," says St. Paul, addressing them, "unto yourselves." That is his first thought—that they should attend not to their flock, but to themselves. It is advice which he reiterates elsewhere. For nobody can read his Epistles, especially the Pastoral Epistles (if I may assume them to be his), without seeing how great is the stress there laid in several passages upon the personal qualities of a bishop. Such language as this is familiar enough to Christian ears : " Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. The bishop, therefore, must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach. . . . Moreover, he must have good testimony from them that are

without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

Or again: "The bishop must be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate."

Nay, St. Paul feels no scruple in insisting upon a high moral character as being necessary not only to the bishop himself, but to the members of his family. The demand so made is not, I think, superfluous. It is possible to hold, and I would as strongly as anybody, that the liberty of marriage should be conceded to all the clergy, and yet to acknowledge that in the ranks of the Episcopate there have been some men who have not entirely satisfied the Apostolic definition of a bishop as "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity"; for St. Paul adds, "If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

"Take heed," then, my brethren, "unto yourselves." Let your own lives and the lives of your families be bright examples of Christian faith and Christian duty. It is the grave and awful responsibility of the clerical office that the world is so apt to judge the Church by the clergy and, above

all, by the bishops. How solemn, then, how vital, is the need that in the bishop of a diocese there should shine before men the light of a true spirituality! He must not be altogether like other men, nor even like other clergymen. He must live a higher life. He must breathe a purer air. There must be in him a certain aloofness from the controversies of the world. He does ill if he associates himself overmuch with particular secular or ecclesiastical interests. He must shrink from that spirit of party which St. Paul calls heresy. It must not be possible to say of him, as of a partisan, that upon this or that question he is bound to take a stated line. He must avoid surrounding himself with a *coterie* of admirers who are only models of his speech and echoes of his voice. In the State, as in the Church, it must be recognised that he is one who lives near to God, and who regards all human affairs in the light of heaven. In a word, he must contribute to the society in which he moves something which, if it were not for his presence, would be felt to be lacking there; and that something will be his moral disinterestedness, his spiritual elevation. Perhaps he will gain influence, and not lose it, by so acting. "It may be observed," says Bingham, "that the authority of bishops was never greater in the world than when they concerned themselves

only in the exercise of their own proper spiritual power."

"Take heed unto yourselves." Take heed also "to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." "In the which," not "over the which." The change made in the Revised Version is significant. You, my brethren, as other bishops who serve the Church in the colonies and dependencies of the Empire, will be happily exempted from the suspicion of worldly splendour. What the historian Strype describes as "the port of a bishop" will be as remote from your grasp as from your choice. Thank God! it is a phenomenon scarcely discernible now at home. The simple, strenuous life which you will live is more apostolic, more Christ-like. In Bishop Wilson's words: "The marks of grandeur are a burden to a holy bishop. He bears them before men, but through humility laments them before God."

It is not over the flock, but in the flock, as fellow-workers—nay, fellow-servants—with the clergy and the laity of your diocese that you will exercise your sacred ministry. Believe me, you will gain more by sympathy than by authority; you will enjoy the greater respect as you demand it less; you will be the leader of men in such degree as they shall feel you to be their friend.

For he who would rule a large number of human beings must learn to rule them not by their intellects, but by their affections. "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock." You will be pastors—chief pastors of your flocks. May I not impress upon you that in Holy Scripture it is the pastoral aspect of the Christian ministry, not the sacerdotal, which holds the most prominent place?

Jesus Christ Himself is the good, or beautiful Shepherd. It is He who says, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so I send you." Heaven forbid, brethren, that by any word of mine I should seek to rob you of any ideal which may give you strength or help, as you enter to-day upon the sacred work of the Episcopate; yet what ideal can be more inspiring than the pastoral? The staff borne before you in the offices of the Church is its symbol. To "feed" or "shepherd the Church of God," to guard the flock against "grievous wolves," to lead it in green pastures and by the waters of comfort, to care for it, and, if need be, to suffer for it; above all, to feed it with the living bread, which is the source of all spiritual health and happiness—what a duty! what a privilege is this! It answers, I know, to the highest and purest ambition of human nature.

Remember then, oh remember, that you are, above all, the shepherds of Christ's flock. "Hold

up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost." I know not—who indeed is there that can know?—to what height of self-sacrifice He may call you. Be it what it may, His grace, His example shall be sufficient for you. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

"Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock." Not to one part of it or to one party, but to all the flock. He is no true bishop who is the shepherd of some members of the Church, but not of all. The Church of England is your mother. She is the wisest, the most sympathetic, of Churches. She is the hope of Christendom in the coming ages. If to any Church the future of progressive humanity belongs, it belongs to her. Be it your effort, then, to be as narrow and as broad, as conservative and as liberal, as tenacious of the past and yet as eager for the future, as the Church herself is. You will lose half your influence, and you will deserve to lose it, if even they who differ most widely from you in opinion do not recognise that it is your supreme desire to be just.

I have tried, my brethren, to set before you, as well as I am able, the true temper or spirit of the Episcopate in the Church to-day. All that remains for me is to emphasise two essential

thoughts which the text suggests as strengthening your hands in the grave responsibility which lies before you. In a few minutes you will receive your consecration as bishops. The consecration will be not of men but of God. It is "the Holy Ghost" which "makes you bishops" in the Church. The solemn words which will be spoken over you, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the Church of God," will be your warrant, your encouragement, your inspiration. To some who are here the memory of those words has been the one abiding solace in their lives. As they lay their hands upon you, they will recall the hour when episcopal hands were so laid upon themselves. How much has happened to them—to us—since then! How much that we could never have hoped or feared! The day of your consecration may prove to you, my brethren, the gladdest day or the saddest of your lives. Whatever it be, you will derive courage, the courage which a bishop often needs, from the thought that "the Holy Ghost"—yes, none other than He—hath "made you bishops to feed the Church of God." Think of that Church in the light of those solemn and splendid words, "which He purchased with His own blood." For in those words lies the soul of Christianity.

It has been my fortune, brethren, to make some

study of Christianity in relation to the other religious faiths and systems of the world. May I state in two or three sentences the conclusions which have forced themselves upon me? I have realised not so much the similarity existing between Christianity and other religions as the superiority of Christianity to them all. Yet the universality of the religious instinct among men is a fact which the votaries of the highest religion may thankfully appreciate. I have realised that Christianity is the one religion endowed with the promise or potency of becoming the universal religion of mankind. If ever there is one only religion in the world, it will be the religion of Jesus Christ. No honest and thoughtful person supposes that the whole world will become Mohammedan or Buddhist or Hindu; but it may become Christian. Already Jesus Christ has demonstrated the power of drawing converts to the cross from every nation under heaven. But I have realised too that the Christianity which will evangelise the world is not that poor ghost of a gospel which, like some ring-marked tree in the Australian bush, stands barren and bare without any living, Divine, risen, and ascended Lord; it is the gospel of the Incarnation and the Redemption. Brethren, you will have no message worth carrying to the heathen—none for which

they will give, or will dream of giving, you thanks—still less will you have any message worth carrying to your fellow-countrymen in the exacting circumstances of a new civilisation, if you cannot tell them how “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

With a full heart, brethren, fuller perhaps than you can know, I address to you my last and deepest greeting. It has happened to me to be associated with you both through a common work—with one in India, with the other in Manchester. Were it not for that connection, I am almost the last person who could naturally have been privileged to preach this sermon. But I have been a visitor to both your dioceses; I have been a worshipper in both your cathedrals; I have been a guest in both your houses. I have given some little study on the spot to the special conditions under which you will live and labour as bishops. You are called to a task of a high and sacred responsibility; nor are the qualifications requisite for it wanting, I think, in either of you.

One of you will carry with him to the strangely commingled population of Singapore that union of physical and spiritual gifts which has always

and everywhere been deeply valued in the British Empire, and a missionary experience gained by various service in the East under one of the most distinguished and devoted of Indian bishops. May I not add that, in the person of his wife, he will carry with him a representative of the incalculable blessing which Medical Missions are capable of bringing by Divine grace to the womanhood of the Oriental world ?

The other—my own close friend and colleague of the past three years—as he enters upon a sacred office that is second in spiritual importance to none outside the British Isles and to few within them, leaves in many hearts at home the confident hope that his wisdom, his restraint, the tenacity with which he holds his own opinions, and his consideration for the opinions of others, his easy intercourse with men of all classes, his outspokenness, his sincerity, his good humour, and, above all, his evangelical preaching, as they have commended him to the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire, will commend him to New South Wales and to Australia at large. He will find, I think, that in the spirit of Manchester, as a distinguished colonial administrator once remarked to me, there is something akin to the spirit of the great cities of the Commonwealth. Upon him and upon his wife and family, who

will share with him the joys and the sacrifices of a new life thirteen thousand miles away from home, we invoke to-day the richest blessing of the Almighty.

Brethren, it is the Church which sends you forth. She must never forget you. I fear she has too often neglected her sons and daughters who have gone out in her cause to distant or pagan lands. But when you grow old, or if your health fails prematurely, it will be her duty to welcome you home. Go forth, then, in the name and the spirit of Jesus Christ. “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops; to feed the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood;” and may He, who alone can unite in one the East and the West, the white-skinned and dark-skinned races of mankind, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free—may He, according to His own promise, be with you and with those who shall come after you “all the days even unto the end of the world”!

XVII

THE LAW OF EPISCOPAL GOVERNMENT¹

“It seemed good unto us.”—ACTS xv. 25.

“It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”—ACTS xv. 28.

IT can seldom have happened that one who holds such an office as mine should be twice called within the brief space of a year to preach sermons at the consecrations of two of his colleagues in the same cathedral chapter to the Episcopate at home and abroad. Less than twelve months ago at the consecration of the Archbishop of Sydney, now the Primate of the Church in Australia, I tried to bring out the historical dignity and the ecclesiastical importance of Episcopacy. I said then, and, lest I should be thought to vary in opinion, I repeat now, that deep as is my devotion—and indeed it is inexpressibly deep—to the cause of reunion in Christendom, yet I fail to see how the Church of England, resting her claim, as she does, upon the principle of continuity, can surrender or compromise by any act or word her inheritance of

¹ A sermon preached in Westminster Abbey at the consecration of the Rev. E. L. Hicks, Canon of Manchester Cathedral, as Bishop of Lincoln, the Rev. J. Walmsley as Bishop of Sierra Leone, and the Rev. T. C. Fisher as Bishop of Nyasaland.

the true historical Episcopate. Fortunately, however, Episcopacy, if it be regarded in itself apart from the shadow of associations lying in the past, is not, or need not be, as it seems, a final bar to reunion. For no well-instructed Nonconformist, I think, would hold Episcopal ordination to be essentially wrong, although the Nonconformists as a body would hold it to be unnecessary, and not a few among them to be undesirable.

The Church of England is in my eyes the hope of Christendom ; she is therefore the hope of the world. No other Christian Church, I think, equals her in the capacity for reconciling the apparently divergent characteristics of liberty and order, of development and stability, of freedom of thought and fulness of faith ; none other has commanded in so high a degree, or commands to-day, the allegiance of culture and learning ; none other can confront with the same equanimity the speculations of an inquisitive and adventurous society.

Nor was the opportunity of the Church of England ever greater or happier than it is to-day. She owes it partly to the changes which have passed in recent years over Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Nonconformity on the other ; they have left her to some extent in possession of a field which had been, and still might be, contested with her ; but of these changes it is not

necessary now to speak. She owes it still more to the spiritual awakening which in all classes of society, and in none more than in the working-class, has pronounced Materialism or Secularism, even in the refined form once known as Agnosticism, to be incapable of satisfying the highest instincts of human nature, and has drawn once more the thoughts and affections of the English-speaking world to God.

Nobody who watched the wonderful outburst of religious devotion in all the country and the Empire upon the death of the late king can well doubt that, in spite of the strange fondness of Englishmen for denying or disguising what is highest and holiest in themselves, we are a God-fearing people at heart.

Yet the Church of England, in spite of all her spiritual fervour, lies as though stricken with a mysterious malady which threatens her life. Beautiful characters, thank God ! she still produces, not a few of them ; holy and humble pastors of souls in town and country ; women who are as angels of charity ; liberal benefactors ; ministers of profound sympathy with sorrow and suffering ; toilers who spend and are spent in the slums of crowded cities ; and others who eat out their hearts, and many a time lay down their lives, in the inexorable solitude of heathenism. But for a corporate, con-

tinuous policy, for a scientific warfare under Christ's banner against the serried forces of evil, for an advance all along the line upon one and the same objective, for discipline, for concentration, for definiteness of aim, for the authoritative solution of difficulties whether practical or theoretical, for efficiency of organisation, for the consciousness of a commanding power thrilling through her members, and through the least and the lowliest as truly as through the greatest, she practically acknowledges her impotence.

"The Church of England," said a critical though not unsympathetic observer, "never knows her own mind." She does not know it, because she has in a large measure lost the sense of government. But that loss at once touches Episcopacy; for in an episcopally constituted Church there can be no other governors than the bishops. There must be something wrong, then, in the Episcopate, or in the attitude of Churchmen generally towards the Episcopate; and because it is so, grave questions in the Church remain unanswered, vital decisions are indefinitely postponed, authority is resisted or ignored, and the aggressive forces which the Church might call into action are to a large extent undisciplined and unemployed. The present danger of the Church of England—I do not wish at all to exaggerate it—is anarchy.

In these circumstances it cannot be wrong to dwell upon the example which was set long centuries ago by the Primitive Church in face of the first grave practical difficulty affecting her corporate life. The student of Christian history will not, I think, deny that the fusion of the Jewish and the Gentile elements, of the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision, within the pale of the one Catholic Church was as formidable a problem as has ever confronted the Church in the nearly twenty centuries of her history. For its intrinsic and almost insuperable difficulty it can only be compared with the problem of reconciling Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in the present day. It threatened to disintegrate, if not indeed at once to destroy, the infant Church. The "certain men" who "came down from Judæa" to Antioch "and taught the brethren, *saying*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved," preached a Gospel which was the utter contradiction and condemnation of Pauline Christianity.

How, then, was the problem met? How was it solved? The answer is clear: By reference to authority.

The Christians at Antioch "appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question."

Let me ask you to observe some few salient features of the process by which the Council of Jerusalem, as it is called—the first Council of the Church summoned to determine a difficult question of communion and of discipline—achieved the pacific issue of its deliberations.

The Council, as described in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is composed of three distinct sets of persons. There are the Apostles, the original bishops from whom all subsequent bishops of the Church, as Clement of Rome says, have derived their succession. There are the presbyters, or elders, representing the general body of the clergy to-day. It is “the apostles and the elders” who assemble “to consider of this matter,” and it is in the name of “the apostles and the elders,” or “the elder brethren,” that the decision is conveyed to the church at Antioch. And there is a third element in the Council—“the whole church,” or the general body of Christians; they, too, are present; they, too, are consenting parties to the decision of the Council.

But although these three sets of persons are all concerned in the first ecclesiastical Council, it is evident that they do not all take the same, or nearly the same, part in its proceedings.

The Apostles are the leading spirits; they, or some of them, are the only speakers, or the only

persons whose speeches are recorded, and they are primarily responsible for the decision to which the Council came.

The elders, or presbyters, the priests as they would now be called, are associated with the Apostles ; it is probable that they, like the Apostles, gave their votes or expressed their opinions in turn ; but they seem to have been more like assessors than judges in their own right.

The Church as a whole probably signified its acquiescence in the decision of the Council by acclamation—that was all.

Upon the serious matter then submitted to the Council of Jerusalem there was a discussion, and there was a decision. The Church of the Apostolic Age was far from consenting to the craven policy —what else, brethren, can I call it ?—of inaction in the presence of a grave emergency, the policy of believing, or pretending to believe, that it is impossible or inopportune to labour for the peace of the Church, and of endeavouring to shuffle off upon our children, who may be wiser and graver than ourselves, a responsibility which is properly our own. The Church not only discussed the matter, but decided it. The decision was unanimous. It can hardly be supposed that no difference of opinion existed in the minds of the persons present at the Council ; in fact the language used

in the Acts, "it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord," suggests, I think, an antecedent difference. There was "much questioning," possibly even "much disputing." But whatever difference may have existed in individual minds, it was subordinated to the will of the Church, as expressed by the Apostolic College and endorsed by the Presbyterate. Nor was the decision of the Council, at least in its main features, ever questioned by the Church of after days; it was final, it was universally accepted, and it saved the life of the Church.

Brethren, the discussion and the decision of the Council of Jerusalem were alike practicable, because the early Christians believed in the Holy Spirit of God. It seems clear, indeed, that they did not conceive themselves to be exempted by the Holy Spirit's operation from the duty of forming their own judgment, as practical men, upon an ordinary matter of business, such as the despatch of certain emissaries with a letter for delivery to the Church at Antioch. That was their own affair, and they dealt with it upon their own authority. "It seemed good unto us," so my first text runs, "having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul." But they did conceive, in accordance with the solemn promise of the Lord

Himself, that in the sphere of Christian communion and Christian discipline the Holy Spirit would assuredly guide them to a wise and just resolve. In the language of my second text, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."

The Council at Jerusalem affords, I think, a true model or type of government for the Church in all times. It is as right indeed as it is natural to allow the full claim advanced in Book VIII. of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," for the innate superiority of the Apostles to their successors, the bishops in ecclesiastical history. Still it is remarkable that the Apostles do not separate themselves by any overt assertion of authority from the presbyters or from the Church. Their authority is freely conceded to them; it is not by them demanded or declared. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and with the acquiescence of the clergy and the laity, they pronounce their judgment, and it becomes binding, upon the Church.

If, then, the authority of the Apostles in the Council of Jerusalem is, or ought to be, adumbrated, however faintly, by the Episcopate to-day, it is remarkable how far both clergy and laity of the present day at times depart from the true principle of government in the Church.

There are clergymen who sometimes argue, nay, who loudly asserted only the other day in reference to the last Education Bill, that the bishops are representatives of the clergy, members of Parliament, so to say, for clerical constituencies, and that, so far from possessing a title to an independent exercise of their own reason in ecclesiastical affairs, they are guilty of something like a breach of trust, if they do not vote in the House of Lords as the majority of the clergy may wish them to vote. But the bishops are not elected delegates, they are not representatives of the clergy; they are leaders of the clergy. Upon them rests no responsibility for expressing the will of the clergy. But a heavy responsibility rests upon the clergy if they refuse to follow the guidance of the bishops. The demand that the bishops should speak not their own mind but the mind of the clergy, or of the laity of the Church, or of both together, is inconsistent with ecclesiastical usage, and, I think I may say, with Christian humility. Still stranger, still more alien, if possible, from the spirit and practice of the early Church is the conduct of any layman who should presume to lecture the bishops in the Representative Church Council, or elsewhere, upon their duty to the Church—as if the bishops, and still more the archbishops, were not burdened night and day by

the consciousness of that duty—and should venture to issue from the office of some self-constituted society edicts prescribing what it is that the Episcopate in matters of discipline and doctrine ought to do, or not to do.

No, the safety of the Church lies in a reversion to the primitive principle of Episcopal government. Only that Episcopal government, according to the precedent of the early Church, must be the government not of individual bishops, but of the collective Episcopate. Even St. Paul and St. Barnabas were ready to consult the Apostolical College at Jerusalem. Such collective action of the Episcopate is as much needed to-day as it was then. Let the Ignatian theory of the Episcopate be accepted at its full value; still it is not the individual bishop but the Episcopate as a body, that properly legislates for the Church. And if it were not presumptuous in me to criticise the celebrated sermon which Canon Liddon preached at the consecration of the last Bishop of Lincoln—the sermon afterwards published under the title, “A Father in Christ”—I should be tempted to say that he made too much of the individual bishop, and too little of the collective Episcopate. For the individualism of bishops may prove a danger and even an injury to the Church. What becomes of Episcopal government if the doctrine

or the ritual which is prohibited in one diocese is encouraged or permitted in another, and if a river or a boundary-stone marks the confines of orthodoxy and heresy, of legality and illegality in the Church of England? It is my hope then, nay, it is my earnest prayer, that the bishops of the Church of England, acting, as the circumstances of the Church may allow, in Synod, first provincial, then national, and finally, as in the Lambeth Conference, if I may call it so, ecumenical, may, with the counsel and consent of the clergy and laity, resume after too long a lapse the direct government of the Church. If they appeal for the support of Churchmen, and appeal collectively on the score of their ecclesiastical and spiritual authority, they will not, I think, in the end fail to win obedience. For the Churchman, and still more the clergyman, who shall disobey the collective Episcopate, can hardly claim to exhibit good Churchmanship in an Episcopal Church.

But the voice which shall command the assent of the Church must be the voice of the Episcopate in council. The bishops may not be unanimous, but they must be united; when their decision is made, although it be but the decision of the majority, it must go forth to the Church as the judgment of the collective Episcopate; and the clergy and the laity of the Church, in accepting

and endorsing it, will be true to the spirit of primitive Christianity.

There will be less difficulty in the way of individual bishops subordinating their own will to the general judgment of the Episcopate, or of the clergy and laity of the Church yielding assent to the judgment of the bishops, if all alike, bishops, priests, and laymen, realise the indwelling and inspiring presence of the Holy Spirit. The decision of the Council of Jerusalem was felt to express the will not of the Council itself alone, but of the Holy Spirit within the Council. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." The circumstances of the Church, as they change with the passing of the centuries, necessarily alter the means and methods of administration. History repeats itself often in outlines, but never in details. It is impossible to reproduce in the twentieth Christian century the ecclesiastical conditions of the first century. Never again will the whole Church come together in one place; never again will the Church meet under the presidency of the Apostolic College. But the bishops are the successors of the Apostles. Convocation represents in some degree, however imperfectly, the great body of the clergy; the Representative Church Council reflects, perhaps still more imperfectly, the mind of the Church. The precedent of the Apostolic College, issuing its

decision with the concurrence of the clergy and the acquiescence of the laity, suggests the one only path of vital Church reform. Above all, there is no reason to believe that our Lord's promise of the Holy Spirit as "guiding" His Church "into all the truth" is limited to the first century or to the centuries of the Ecumenical Councils. Still less reason is there to suppose that it applies to the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and does not apply to the Church of England to-day.

It may seem an impertinence in a preacher such as I am to make the attempt of sketching a policy of ecclesiastical government. Yet there are times when boldness is prudence, when reform is the truest conservatism. It is my belief that if the bishops of the Church, after taking counsel with the clergy and laity, will declare as with one voice their deliberate judgment upon matters vital and urgent, which it were the height of ecclesiastical unwise-dom to put aside, such matters even as the revision of the Prayer Book, or the conditions of communion in the Church herself, they would not at once, perhaps, yet after a time, as acting in complete conformity to the example of the early Church, find a response of loyalty which has yet perhaps been scarcely dreamed to be possible. For the Church to-day is not unwilling to learn anew

the sacred lesson that she may rely in matters of doctrine and discipline upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit Himself. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." It may so "seem good" still, and that which "seems good" becomes the decision or dogma of the Church.

It is with these thoughts that I turn now to you who stand at this moment on the threshold of your consecration, in the most solemn and sacred epoch of your lives. You will be called upon at home and abroad to exercise the authority of government. You will need to strengthen yourselves as far as possible by the consent of your brother bishops and of the Church. You will need still more the consciousness of the Holy Spirit as guiding you and them into the fulness of truth. Two of you will go forth to the mysterious land which has so long, as it seemed, "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death," but has in these last days been of a sudden so brightly illuminated by the effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness.

Not in a political or moral sense only, but still more spiritually and religiously, is the fine Virgilian distich true which was once quoted by an illustrious statesman in the House of Commons upon the abolition of the Slave Trade:—

"*Nos primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis ;
Illuc sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.*"

What a cloud of witnesses seem to hover around your African sees! The Bishopric of Nyasaland reaches back in its history to the journeys of the greatest and saintliest of all travellers—David Livingstone—for the Universities' Mission to Central Africa was his child. My brother, he did not die in vain. Some years ago, when I held office in this Abbey Church of Westminster, I was summoned one day from my house in the Little Cloisters to see a dark-skinned foreigner who was inquiring for Livingstone's grave. He was the Katikiro or Prime Minister of Uganda; and as I stood with this native of Uganda—himself a free-man, himself a Christian—looking upon the slab which covers the mortal remains of Livingstone, I could not but feel that his dying prayer in behalf of the dark continent for which he spent his life had been indeed Divinely answered. You, my brother, amidst your solitude and weariness, may claim a spiritual inheritance in such honoured names as Maples and Smythies and Steere and Mackenzie and Livingstone himself.

Scarcely less interesting or inspiring in its memories is the Bishopric of Sierra Leone. For there the white man has faced not only his burden, but alas! only too often his grave. There a succession of bishops and clergy, moved only by the prevailing love of Jesus Christ, have advanced

as in a forlorn hope decade after decade to storm the citadel of Satan. Let us not be too hard upon the Portuguese, or even upon the Englishmen, who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries originated the African Slave Trade. Men are culpable, not if they do not advance beyond the morality of their own age, but if they do not live up to the morality which they know and own to be true. Did not Las Casas aim at diffusing Christianity among the negroes of Africa by encouraging the importation of African slaves into America? Did not John Newton speak of himself as having seldom or never enjoyed happier hours of devout converse with his Maker than when he was at sea as the officer of a slave-ship? Yet the beneficent triumph of Wilberforce and Clarkson was needed to make amends, though after so long a time, for the cruel enterprise of Hawkins.

In Africa the Church of Christ stands face to face with two grave difficulties—one external, the other internal. She is confronted with the formidable rivalry of that religion which might have been, as Carlyle has said, no more than a form of Christianity or a Christian heresy, had the prophet of Arabia gained his knowledge of Christian faith and Christian practice from any other than corrupt and polluted sources, but which has become the most powerful and the

most virulent enemy of Christendom. Yet simple and sublime as is the creed of Islam, and splendid as is often its missionary advance among heathen peoples, it proves everywhere to be incapable of lifting a society or an individual soul above a certain elevation, or of satisfying the deepest spiritual instincts of human nature. For the essential weakness of Islam is the absence of an ideal. There is nothing in it which reveals the Divine Nature to man. The measure of the difference between Islam and Christianity is the contrast between the persons of Mohammed and of Jesus Christ.

Within the Church in Africa, as elsewhere, there lies the ever-haunting problem of native administration. I know only too well from my own experience that that is a problem which, though it may seem easy to Christians at a distance, is felt in India as in Africa itself to be fraught with serious difficulties. In Sierra Leone the Church is already self-supporting, self-governing, and I may thankfully add, self-extending ; but it still proves necessary to reinforce the Church with clergy, and even more with bishops, from Europe. Difficult is the problem of assimilating European and native Christians in every Church ; still more difficult the problem of elevating native clergymen to the Episcopate, especially where the

European and native elements are combined in the same Church. There has long been, there may still be, need of hesitation. Yet the Church must never lose sight as her ultimate goal of the truth that in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. After all, it was at Sierra Leone that the old slave Adjai, who is known in the history of the Church as Samuel Crowther, landed after receiving ordination, and his Episcopate became a light of the Church of Christ.

My brothers, you are going out to your distant sees, scarce knowing whither you go. What your future may be none can tell, save God alone. But the life of a bishop or a clergyman in a heathen land is, I can personally attest, far more trying than the life of any bishop at home. It is not only the physical fatigue or suffering which he may be called to bear, it is the loneliness, the despondency, the atmosphere of heathenism which makes the missionary's life so sad. Even a letter which means so little at home means so much to a Christian in the heart of Africa. May God grant you both, in ample measure, the consciousness of His sustaining grace! You will need it every day of your lives. We, too, will give you—it is all that we can give—our prayers.

And what shall I say to you, my dear friend and colleague of the past four years, at whose side it has been my privilege to work in so happy, intimate a relation, with scarce a word of difference, in the vast northern community which has been our home? Even apart from the ties which associate the members of the same Church and the same cathedral chapter, you and I have possessed so many interests and aspirations in common—the love of classical and sacred learning; the unwillingness to let the Church of the nation be treated as though she were the appanage of one political party; the strong resolve to emancipate the people, as far as in us lay, by all just means from the degrading thraldom of the Liquor Trade. Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since you surrendered the leisure which is a scholar's priceless boon, and the tranquillity of a rural parish, for arduous and anxious labour in a great city, and even in the great city's dismal slums. Now at length, late it may be but not too late, has come the full recognition of your ministry. May God give you strength and courage, wisdom, temperance, sympathy! You are called to an ancient see, no longer stretching as once from the Humber to the Thames, but still immense; a see enriched by the varied and chequered, yet all alike inspiring, memories of

such prelates as Remigius, Hugh of Avalon, Robert Grosseteste, Rotherham, Wolsey, Williams, Sanderson, Tenison, Wake, Kaye, Wordsworth, and King. You are called to the cathedral, most beautiful, perhaps, of all English cathedrals in its architecture, and certainly most beautiful in the witness of its commanding site upon its “sovereign hill,” to religion as the true climax and consummation of a city’s life. And if the mantle which falls upon you from your revered predecessor in the see is, so far as human imperfection will allow, a mantle snowy white, all the greater and the deeper will be your need of the Church’s prayers that you may preserve it unsullied to the end.

It is well that you should receive consecration here in this holy of holies of English-speaking Christendom; for here, in the Abbey of Westminster—not indeed in this Church, but in the Chapel of St. Catherine adjoining the house which once was my own—St. Hugh himself was consecrated to the See of Lincoln more than seven hundred years ago. Well, too, is it that you should receive consecration on this festival of the Baptist, not only because he did “constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth’s sake,” but because it was the Chapel of St. John the Baptist that St. Hugh chose to be

his resting-place, and he lies there in the cathedral which was his and which will be yours. "I wish to be buried," he said, "in the Cathedral Church which is dedicated to the blessed Mother of God, near the altar of St. John the Baptist."

It is with a full heart, full of sacred, and in some degree, sad memories, yet also of ennobling hopes, that I bid you all an affectionate farewell. Such a consecration as this of bishops for England and for Africa approves the catholicity of the Church of England. It is an assurance of that sublime doctrine which will ever, I know, live in your hearts when you are parted each from the others—the Communion of Saints. I "commend you to God and to the word of His grace." I have spoken of government in the Church; it is a vital and urgent need; I felt I could not forgo the opportunity of dwelling upon it. Yet it is good to remember that there is no title which a bishop can possess to the obedience of his clergy and laity so strong as the personal holiness of his life. We have met here to-day; when shall we meet—shall we ever meet—on earth again? God only knows. Let me conclude, then, with the one prayer which I think, nay, I know, is rising for you at this moment from hundreds and thousands of hearts in this Abbey Church and elsewhere in the homes from which you come

and in the sees to which you go, that God who is All-holy and All-merciful may vouchsafe us grace to do His will humbly and patiently on earth, and then to meet once more through His eternal love before His throne in heaven.

XVIII

THE CHURCH AND NONCONFORMITY ¹

IT is with especial pleasure that I welcome your brotherhoods to the cathedral to-day. I recognise the graceful courtesy of the desire which your ministers have expressed to me for a service within the ancient and hallowed walls of the mother church of Manchester. There can be no harm, and there must, I think, be great good, in our common worship ; “ for we be brethren,” and the less strife there is between us the better for ourselves and the better for the city as a whole.

There are two possible attitudes of a Christian Church towards Christians who stand outside the Church’s pale. One is the attitude of the Church of Rome ; it is an absolute refusal of sympathy or co-operation in Christian work. Another, a very different attitude, is in my judgment both historically and ecclesiastically suitable to the Church of England. It is to make not the most but the least of differences, to make not the least but the most of agreements ; it is to regard

¹ An address given to Nonconformists in Manchester Cathedral.

Nonconformists not so much as aliens or heretics, but as fellow-Christians making by another path from the Church's own for the same moral and spiritual goal. I at least can never look with other than sympathetic eyes upon the religious Christian bodies whose records are adorned by such names as those of John Williams, William Carey, Robert Morrison, David Livingstone, Robert Moffat, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, William Booth, and Alexander M'Laren.

The history of Nonconformity in England, if I read it truly, has been the history of a long protest for the rights of the individual conscience. No protest could in time past have been more honourable or more necessary. It has been ennobled by many lofty individual lives resolutely consecrated to one great object. And if it seems to me that the Nonconformity of to-day has somewhat changed its ecclesiastical character, the reason is only that the battle of the individual conscience has been fought and won; there is but little religious tyranny, if any at all, in England now; and Nonconformity, having thus lost its spiritual object, has inclined to spend its energy more freely upon social and political reforms.

The elevating principle of Nonconformity in its long history has, I think, been the passion for

righteousness. Deep down in the heart of English Nonconformists has lain the profound sentiment that they must not, for any secular consideration, falter with the moral law of God. Churchmen, indeed, have not been faithless to this high ideal of Christian duty. The clergy of the Church of England have at times, though not perhaps invariably, shown themselves bold to speak of the Divine testimonies "even before kings." Anselm so spoke to William Rufus; Ken so spoke to Charles II. The seven bishops in the reign of James II. were the protagonists of English liberty. When Latimer was accused by Henry VIII. of preaching seditious doctrines before him, he replied: "I never thought myself worthy, nor ever sued, to be a preacher before your Grace. But I was called to it; and would be willing, if you mislike me, to give place to my betters. But if your Grace allow me for a preacher, I would desire your Grace to discharge my conscience. Give me leave to frame my discourse according to mine audience."

There have been not a few historical occasions when the Nonconformists have strongly upheld the cause of national righteousness. They have been zealous and ardent—even more zealous and ardent, I am afraid, at times than Churchmen—in the great movements of social and political reform.

To them has been owing a large part of the legislative enactments which have rendered the life of the nation stronger and better, and the lives of individual citizens happier and holier. Nor did they ever deserve or attain a greater national respect than when in recent days they declared with one accord that they would rather postpone or forgo the political measures upon which their hearts had long been set than condone the flagrant immorality of a distinguished political leader.

It is legitimate, perhaps, to hope that the course of events has of late years suggested to many earnest minds certain reflections which may tend to mitigate the opposition of the Nonconformists to the Church. Not only have the Nonconformists come to realise that the principle of complete severance between Church and State was no essential element in the policy of men so eminent in the history of Nonconformity as John Wesley and Thomas Chalmers; but the Scottish Churches Act of 1905 has shown that the State may at any time be called to decide through its secular courts ecclesiastical questions affecting the property and with it the doctrine of the Free Churches. Whether the organisation of the Reformed Churches upon a non-Episcopal basis was originally justified or not, many thoughtful Nonconformists

in the present day hold that Episcopacy is not in itself an absolute bar to reunion or conciliation between the Church and Nonconformity. The Nonconformists may and do hold that Episcopal ordination is unnecessary ; but they do not hold that it is wrong. The principle of a ministerial succession through the laying on of hands is dear to many devout minds outside the Episcopal Churches, especially among the Presbyterians. Then, too, the Collectivist or Socialistic spirit of the age tells against the ecclesiastical divisions and sub-divisions which are perilous to Nonconformity. There is in many minds, without the Church as well as within, a desire for Christian reunion.

Let me say frankly that I do not look forward to reunion as lying within the near future. Nor, indeed, is reunion the object which I have most at heart. There is a peril in uniformity as well as in diversity. If there is any lesson taught by the history of the Christian Church, it is that, when the Church of the West was undivided, she became corrupt. Competition in the sacred as in the secular sphere brings blessings no less than drawbacks in its train. It is not the separate organisation of the Christian bodies which is chiefly deplorable—although that, too, is a departure from the unity which Christ willed—it is the mutual

animosity between them. A generous rivalry in the promotion of the highest national interests might itself be a gain to the nation.

I do not anticipate, then, nor indeed do I greatly desire, the absorption of Nonconformity in the Church of England. The end which I believe to be practicable is not absorption but confederation. There is work for the Church to do, and work for Nonconformity to do also. If I may refer to an old Biblical story, the enemies of both, "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwell" still "in the land." It is time that each party should say to the other, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren." The land is large enough for both; it is not yet occupied, still less is it sanctified; and it were well that the time and thought spent upon religious controversy should be devoted to the saving of men's souls.

It is my belief that many Nonconformists cherish in their hearts, as indeed your presence to-day shows you to cherish, a deep feeling of respect and reverence for the Church of their fathers. But the Church must not alienate that feeling. She must recognise that she is in a large measure responsible through her own fault for the existence of Nonconformity. No Churchman who

justifies the Reformation can justly doubt that the early Methodists left the Church unwillingly and sorrowfully, only because it was not possible for them at that time to satisfy within the Church their burning zeal for the evangelisation of the land. The worst charge which can be brought against them is that they might have been more patient. But if the truth, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” applies to the Churches as well as individuals, no Churchman can doubt that the Spirit of God has visibly moved and wrought in the history of Nonconformity.

The time is not yet ripe for actual reunion; perhaps it will never come; but the duty of Churchmen and Nonconformists alike is to cultivate that tolerant and sympathetic spirit which alone can ever make reunion possible. In the world there are comparatively few questions of principle; there are many questions of personality. Let the temper of suspicion, of distrust, of rancour be done away, and political or ecclesiastical differences tend to settle themselves. It is in that spirit that I ask you to consider what we can do, you and I, to bring about a better understanding between the different Christian denominations in Manchester.

First of all, then, we will avoid irritating language; we will try to see the good and not

the evil one of another. With all my heart I repudiate the ecclesiastical spirit which can discern in Nonconformity nothing but a virus needing to be extirpated from the spiritual life of the nation. I ask you in turn to repudiate the temper which is blind to the noble service wrought in history by the Church of England, and can only regard her as ruining more souls than she saves. A good Churchman is not a narrow Churchman ; he is one who holds his Church so dear that he can afford to cultivate a temper not of tolerance only but of sympathy towards his fellow-Christians. It is well to remember that when He who is the Master of us all was invited by His disciples to censure a man for casting out devils in another name than His, He replied, "Forbid him not."

It will be easier for us to abstain from provoking language if we lay to heart the truth, so obvious and yet so frequently ignored, that the business of a Church is to reform itself and not to reform its neighbours. Nonconformity is not concerned to improve the Church, whether by disestablishment or disendowment, or by any other means; the duty of Nonconformity is to make better Nonconformists. Similarly the Church is not called to point the finger of scorn at the Nonconformists; the duty of the Church is to make better Churchmen. It is a strange paradox of human

nature that men are always wanting to improve each other, and think so little of improving themselves. They see the mote in their brothers' eyes; they fail to see the beam in their own eyes. It were well for you and for me to aim from this day forward at drawing our own Churches nearer to Christ; for, as we draw nearer to Him, we shall draw nearer each to the other.

There is a famous saying of Burke's which Churchmen and Nonconformists alike may lay to heart: "I have endeavoured so to cultivate my mind that I shall in everything consider an agreement of sentiment as a much better ground of friendship, without making a difference a reason for enmity."

What, then, is the amount of difference or agreement between us? We differ, perhaps, upon the value of a liturgical service, or upon the religious element which is possible in a national system of education, or upon the authority for an apostolic succession in the ministry of the Church, or upon Episcopacy, or upon the association of the State with religion. These are serious points of difference; it is no wish of mine to disguise or disparage them; but are they equivalent to the beliefs in which we are all at one? What are the points of agreement in Christian doctrine between us? Are they not these: "I believe in God the Father

Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ; And in Jesus Christ, His only son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and buried, He descended into hell ; The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, The Forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting." In all these articles of the Creed there is but one—the belief in the Holy Catholic Church—about which any vital difference of interpretation exists among us. We are all at one, too, in believing that loyalty to the principles of the Reformation is the secret of theological truth and of national greatness. But if there are so many points of agreement and so few of difference, and the points of agreement are so far weightier, surely it is irrational to disregard the many points as grounds of united action, and to magnify the few points as grounds of unending hostility.

We may seek and find opportunities of common prayer and common work. We are all the advocates of temperance and purity, we are all devoted to the social elevation of the people, we are all

advocates of reform in the dark and desolate regions of the Congo, we are all pledged to the cause of civic morality, we are all votaries of international peace, we are all concerned in the just and righteous character of the Empire, we all recognise the value of a lofty moral example in public life. We may all stand side by side upon the platforms of the British and Foreign Bible Society or the Student Volunteer movement. The Holy Spirit, who “bloweth” like the wind “where it listeth,” moves the hearts now of Churchmen and now of Nonconformists, and now of both alike, to high and holy enterprise. Believe me, so far as we co-operate in purposes of an elevating and uniting tendency, we shall think less of our divergences, we shall think more of our common faith and duty.

Is not the Incarnation itself the supreme lesson of sympathy? We say sometimes one to another, “If I were you,” or “If I were in your place, I would do this or that.” But none of us can ever be another, none can ever truly stand in another’s place; were such a change of personality only possible, it would mitigate half the difficulties of human life. But Jesus Christ, being Divine, did become human; He did stand of His own free choice where we stand; He did live and suffer and die for us; and the lesson of His Incarnation is

sympathy. If we would love and know each other, let us demand no larger terms of salvation than He demanded of His disciples when He was upon earth.

Brethren, I ought to look upon you, or there are critics who tell me I ought to look upon you, as aliens; but in my eyes you are brethren. It is not probable, it may perhaps not be desirable, that the division between Church and Nonconformity should be done away. To quote some well-known words of Rowland Hill: "I do not wish such partitions destroyed, but only lowered a little, that we may shake hands a little easier over them." It is time that a truce of God should be proclaimed. Too much energy has been spent in disputation, and the energy so spent has been all withdrawn from charity. "There will come a time," as Hooker said, "when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of art."

Brethren, the "love of Christ constraineth us." "We love Him because He first loved us;" we will love one another because He loved us all. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Sometimes it happens that people ask me to

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write in their birthday books some favourite passage of literature, and I write this saying of Cervantes in "Don Quixote": "Many are the roads by which God brings His own to Heaven." Manchester has been in the past the home of a widespread movement for peace. There was a Manchester School once, there is a Manchester School to-day, which has truly sought peace and ensued it. But the new Manchester School, for which I plead, is the school of all Christians who have so deeply entered into the mind of Jesus Christ that for His sake and in His name they will do their best to put an end to the petty selfish and un-Christian bickerings which have so long and so painfully distracted His Church, and will with one heart and soul consecrate themselves to the lofty and holy service of co-operation in the causes of peace, righteousness, and true and pure religion. May God give us all grace to labour, while life lasts, for that august and sacred end !

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